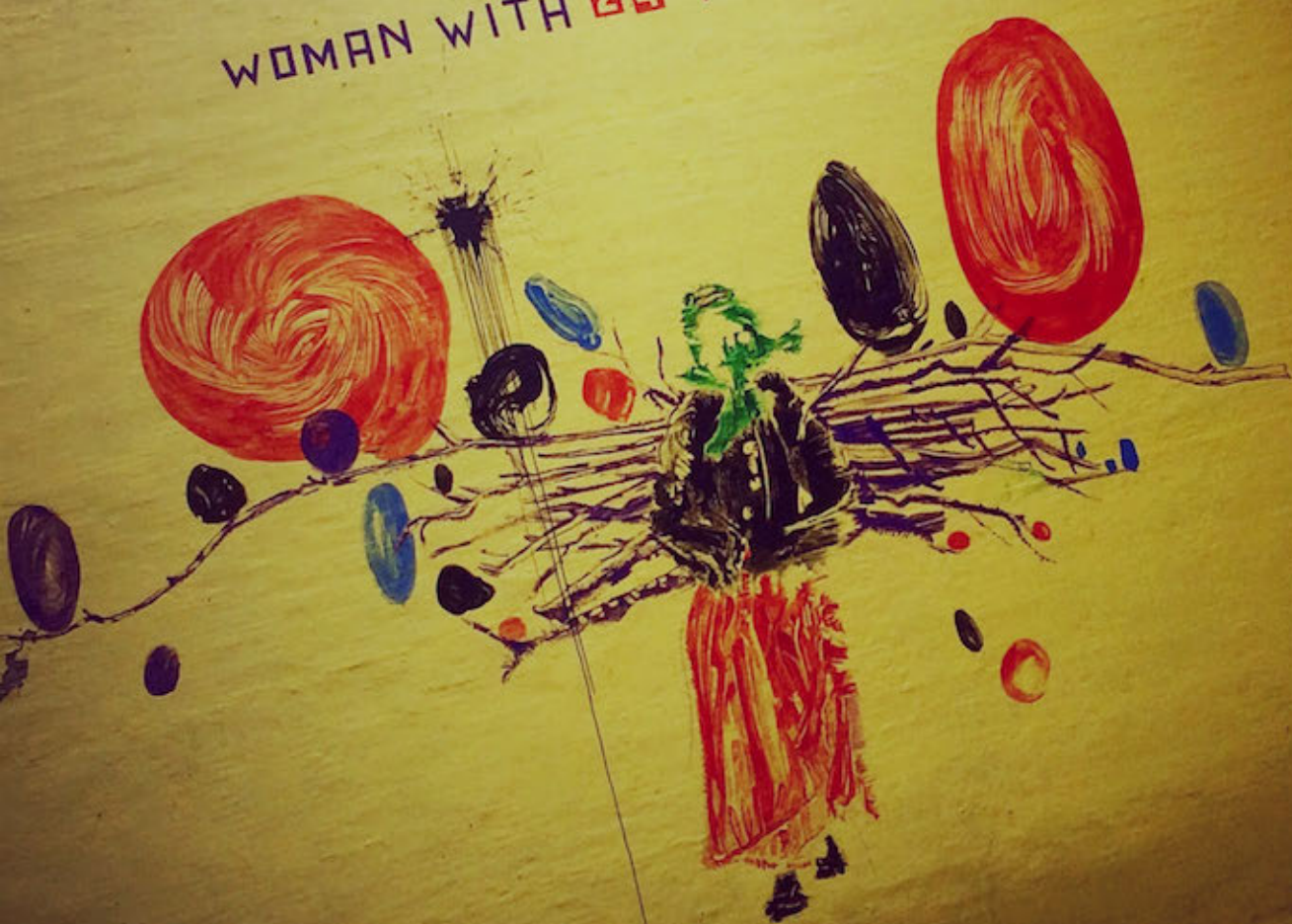# Intersectionality

WOMAN WITH 24 PROBLEMS

ephemera: theory & politics in organization

What is *ephemera: theory & politics in organization*?

ephemera is an independent journal, founded in 2001. *ephemera* provides its content free of charge, and charges its readers only with free thought.
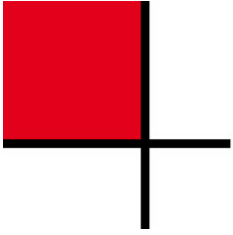
theory
ephemera encourages contributions that explicitly engage with theoretical and conceptual understandings of organizational issues, organizational processes and organizational life. This does not preclude empirical studies or commentaries on contemporary issues, but such contributions consider how theory and practice intersect in these cases. We especially publish articles that apply or develop theoretical insights that are not part of the established canon of organization studies. *ephemera* counters the current hegemonization of social theory and operates at the borders of organization studies in that it continuously seeks to question what organization studies is and what it can become.

politics
ephemera encourages the amplification of the political problematics of organization within academic debate, which today is being actively de-politized by the current organization of thought within and without universities and business schools. We welcome papers that engage the political in a variety of ways as required by the organizational forms being interrogated in a given instance.

organization
Articles published in *ephemera* are concerned with theoretical and political aspects of organizations, organization and organizing. We refrain from imposing a narrow definition of organization, which would unnecessarily halt debate. Eager to avoid the charge of 'anything goes' however, we do invite our authors to state how their contributions connect to questions of organization and organizing, both theoretical and practical.

Intersectionality

Florence Villesèche, Sara Louise Muhr and Martyna Śliwa

Table of Contents

Editorial

Articles

Notes

Interview

Response

Reviews

From radical black feminism to postfeminist hashtags: Re-claiming intersectionality

Florence Villesèche, Sara Louise Muhr and Martyna Śliwa

Attend me, hold me in your muscular flowering arms, protect me from throwing any part of myself away.

Audre Lorde (1986/2009: 132)

Introduction

The term 'intersectionality' was coined by legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s. Originally, it referred specifically to the vulnerable position of black women victims of domestic violence in the socio-legal context of the United States. In a nutshell, Crenshaw argues that the particular situation of black women cannot be equated with that of white women victims or with the larger discrimination faced by the black population, and thus the legal apparatus is not conceived to appropriately consider their cases. In addition, an underlying aim was to contest the assumed 'colour-blindness, neutrality and objectivity' of the criminal justice system in the US (Nash, 2008: 2; Crenshaw, 1989). Besides its root in the legal field, the term 'intersectionality' mirrors debates brought about by radical black feminists in the previous decades and which centres on a critique of a western, white feminism that claims universal reach. Etymologically, an intersection is a place of crossing, of possible colliding. This crossing is here embodied by individuals; categories, grounds for discrimination and oppression are cutting through their bodies, limiting their ability to act, and placing them in some sort of organizational, institutional limbo in which their claims cannot be adequately addressed; Crenshaw (1991) further argues that this weakens the potential of both the anti-patriarchal and the anti-racist projects. Crenshaw is both academically and popularly acknowledged for this work, and although her original argument dates

back from the late 1980s, intersectionality appears to be still, or even more in demand today. Crenshaw (2016) herself defends 'the urgency of intersectionality' in a recent Ted talk which has received nearly one million views.

Yet, how much of the existing body of work is true to the original concept of intersectionality? To what extent the original concept is of relevance beyond its original context is contentious. In recent months, the intersectionality of sex and power has been taking the front stage in public debate. The #metoo hashtag has been used millions of times across social media platforms, and the eponymous movement has been extensively documented in the news media. The online movement has also fed into a discussion of how the shared stories of sexual misconduct is not to be understood as cases of 'women against men', but rather as instances of privileged individuals exercising power over others in specific contexts. Still, in the wake of the 'Black lives matter' movement, the #metoo campaign has been criticized for being co-opted by white, privileged women who are able to speak, and who are able to be heard. On Instagram, a seemingly more frivolous outlet, the hashtag #intersectionalfeminism and close derivatives have been used over 300,000 times. However, many voices denounce the depoliticized, de-contextualized heralding of intersectionality or intersectional feminism. Such hashtagging trends could be seen as idiosyncratic, symptomatic of a postfeminist era in which theories and concepts can be used ad hoc as buzzwords or temporary signifiers before moving on to the next fleeting wave of (online) 'activism'.

Contention points can also be identified in the academic realm. As a preamble, one can remark that scholarly work about intersectionality is still very much in its infancy. A rough analysis of data from Web of Science indicates that about 70% of articles on the topic of intersectionality were published in the last five years. It was only in the 2000s that reviews and classifications of early work about intersectionality, in particular the ones by McCall (2005) and Hancock (2007), helped develop the interest in the topic as both a theory and method. Such reviews show that already early on scholars have defined and applied intersectionality in varied ways, and that, whether as a political, theoretical, or methodological tool, intersectionality constitutes a fruitful heuristic for the social sciences at large. Furthermore, a recent special issue in Gender, Work and Organization (Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher, and Nkomo, 2016) testifies to the continued relevance of intersectionality for management and organization studies.

In this special issue, we voluntarily stick to outlining the set of problematics that we believe need our attention as management and organization studies scholars, rather than professing a specific definition of intersectionality or demarcating appropriate theoretical and methodological frameworks with which to approach it. In the call for papers, we emphasized three avenues that, we believe, deserve more

particular attention for management and organization studies scholars. To start with, the issue of translating the concept of intersectionality from its original legal setting to our areas of research is key. In addition, the possibility to not only focus on oppressed or dominated social groups, but also investigating intersections of power and domination, is also still open to debate. Second, as there is no unified approach to studying intersectionality empirically, there is a still unseized opportunity to experiment with and develop approaches that are suited to and fruitful for management and organization studies. Finally, we invited fellow researchers to consider intersectionality from an ethical and political standpoint, connecting the individual-level embodiment on intersectionality to more collective projects of emancipation and inclusion. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss how this special issue extends and resonates with both the academic and public debate about intersectionality, before turning to an outline of each contribution.

Intersectionality today: Where from, and where to?

As editors of this special issue, in line with other organization studies scholars (see e.g. Harding et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2016), we consider the current interest in intersectionality as a positive sign that feminist-inspired scholarship still has something significant to offer, and that its political dimension lives on. Intersectionality has been seized either as a theoretical lens or methodological approach in a number of literature strands in management and organization studies, including conceptual work (Holvino, 2010), and empirical work on identity (Johansson and Śliwa, 2014; Atewologun et al., 2016), language (Johansson and Śliwa, 2016), entrepreneurship (Knights, 2016), diversity management (Zanoni and Janssens, 2007), or international business research (Zander et al., 2010). Furthermore, we envision the current problematization of intersectionality as a reaffirmation of the existence of constraint in an era where identity is sometimes portrayed as an individual, open choice between a multiplicity of available social identities; and as a reaffirmation of how these identities are traversed by power. Intersectionality makes us question research output and societies seemingly only able to consider one injustice at a time. In particular, intersectionality diverts from a single, dominant focus on gender, as well as from considering only binary variables.

However, it would be too hasty to conclude that intersectionality is the answer to all ills, the panacea that can replace the use of the 'f-word' altogether. This is reminiscent of the idea or 'dream' that intersectionality can become a common language, a central node for feminism (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; Lykke, 2010). As Carbin and Edenheim put it:

> Intersectionality promises almost everything: to provide complexity, overcome divisions and to serve as a critical tool. However, the expansion of the scope of intersectionality has created a consensus that conceals the fruitful and necessary conflicts within feminism. (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013: 233)

In their article, they further interrogate such conflictual aspects of intersectionality from a poststructuralist and postcolonial perspective. In line with this, drawing on critical realism and complexity theory, Walby et al. (2012) identified six dilemmas in the existing intersectionality literature. This special issue addresses a number of tensions echoing such critical reviews. We formulate them as follows: i. a tension between seeing intersectionality as a bounded vs. polymorphous concept; ii. a tension between intersections as stable vs. fluid; iii. a tension between intersectional thinking as a tool to apprehend embodied experiences vs. as a possible limitation to a universal democratic and emancipatory project. Again, the aim of our special issue is not to take sides in these ongoing discussions, but rather to see what intersectionality can 'do' for organization studies at large. Authors in this special issue address, at times passionately, one or the other side of these arguments. We now briefly discuss these tensions and connect them to contributions featured in this special issue.

Intersectionality as a bounded vs. polymorphous concept

Intersectionality, as defined by Crenshaw (1989), is arguably rooted in a structuralist perspective, and tied to the particular intersection of gender and race in the US legal context. Nevertheless, there have been debates both about the concept's genealogy and elasticity. With regards to genealogy, there has been an ongoing discussion about how novel the idea of intersectionality actually was in 1989 – in which case this dating is rather one that signals crystallization of ideas that surfaced long before. For example, it can be contended that Marxist feminism or postcolonial feminism developed as a response to the insufficient discussion of gender in critical streams such as Marxist and postcolonial studies (Brah and Phoenix, 2004). In turn, such claims have been attacked as a typical attempt to deprive non-white feminists of voice, of their capacity to develop relevant and novel concepts and perspectives for feminist work (e.g. Crenshaw, 1992).

In particular, this poses the question of the flexibility with which intersectionality can be used as either a theory or method. Notwithstanding the above debates, a significant part of intersectionality scholarship positions itself vis-à-vis Crenshaw's 1989 milestone definition of and approach to intersectionality. In this issue, Ruel, Mills and Thomas as well as Ulus stay close to the original definition and contextualization of intersectionality and are concerned with gender and race in the United States of America. They operationalize intersectionality to understand

past iconic career trajectories with the notion of anchoring points (Ruel et al.), as well as to make sense of current socio-political debates in relation to (post)feminism by combining intersectionality with psychoanalytical tools (Ulus).

With regards to elasticity, scholars manifest both apprehension and enthusiasm regarding the possibility to use intersectionality outside of a structuralist perspective, as well as beyond the intersection of race and gender (Nash, 2016). In this issue, Liu denounces the liberal appropriation of and the ensuing de-radicalization of intersectionality in organization studies where there has been

> [...] a tendency to engage superficially with intersectionality; focusing on identities and categories of difference, but overlooking processes of differentiation and systems of domination (Dhamoon, 2011). Perhaps even more problematic is a rising tendency to use intersectionality to showcase multiple identities like gender, race and class without any commitment to the social justice aims of intersectionality's Black feminist roots. (p. 82)

In turn, proponents of a wider use of the concept argue that an exclusive focus on the intersection of discriminatory potencies can lead to the side-lining of agency, as well as overlooking potentially insightful intersections of oppression and privilege (Nash 2008). This broad use has led to a more general definition of intersectionality as the intersection of two or more categories; in this issue, Styhre argues that:

> The general proposition of intersectionality theory, which holds that social identities and subjectivities are composed of heterogeneous and at times even contradictory and/or colliding elements, leading to fragmented yet coherent, or at least functional, subject-positions, is applicable to a broader set of actors and organizational settings. (p. 51)

Power and privilege need not be absent from such studies, however. For example, there is still a dearth of research at the intersection of exclusion and privilege, such as that experienced by women in managerial or leadership positions, and on how such individuals can coalesce around this intersectional identity in both formal and informal networks (Villesèche and Josserand, 2017). In addition, echoing the sociological principle known as the 'Matthew effect' (Merton, 1968; Rigney, 2010), that is the fact that certain individuals tend to experience cumulative privilege, researchers in organization studies could also pay more attention to the intersection of privileges so as to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of power and social-symbolic work, and how these are contingent to the socio-historical context of intersections.

Moreover, given the long-deplored scarcity and underdevelopment of methodological tools to deploy intersectionality in empirical work (Marfelt, 2016), there is ample room for innovation and creativity. This challenge is remarkably

attended to across contributions to this special issue, with authors adding to existing methodological insights by way of extension (Liu; Ruel et al.; Shield, this issue), combination (Ulus, this issue), or even dissolution (Christensen, this issue). They thus collectively pose the question of how to track and deconstruct discrimination through space and time. In line with this, further self-reflexivity and debates as to what we assume are the boundaries of intersectional research is needed, to ensure that the concept remains fruitful without being defused.

Intersections as stable vs. fluid

What does it mean to talk about race and gender as intersecting categories? This is another one of the questions that researchers have debated in relation to intersectionality. The tension, or even paradox, between stability and fluidity is present in the original conceptualization itself: the intersection of the prejudice affecting the category 'black American' with the one affecting the category 'woman' results cannot be adequately addressed by considering its components either in isolation or in addition. Does this mean that a given intersection could be considered a new, distinct category? Judith Butler notoriously critiqued this additive logic:

> The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and ablebodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed "etc." at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete. This failure, however, is instructive: what political impetus is to be derived from the exasperated "etc." that so often occurs at the end of such lines? This is a sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself. It is the supplement, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all. (Butler, 1990: 143)

In the same vein, joining other researchers in management and organization studies such as Tatli and Özbilgin (2012), Risberg and Pilhofer (this issue) claim that 'categories are accompanied by power and relationships of inequality and have universalist and essentialist tendencies'. Yet, they do not argue for a dissolution of categories, and acknowledge that 'categorization helps us by simplifying and guiding our actions and behaviours in our everyday lives, routinizing them, providing structure, bringing order to a complex world'. How can we address structurally produced discrimination through fixed categories without taking the risk of perpetuating inequality regimes (Acker, 2006)? A proposed remedy is to construct categories from an emic rather than etic perspective (Talti and Özbligin, 2012; Marfelt, 2016), that is to detect locally relevant and significant categories that serve as a basis for privilege and discrimination. Still, these locally, inductively

constructed categories themselves could be argued to add to the 'etc.' type of list that Butler criticizes.

Moreover, the use of categories in intersectional research, regardless of whether their 'diversity' is developed in an etic or emic way, connects to a broader reflection on the connections between diversity and identity, and on identity as fixed or fleeting (Holck et al., 2016). Identities can be actual and projected (Beech, 2008); material and virtual (Schultze, 2014); past and present (Bardon et al., 2015). This poses the question of the way in which intersectionality can be addressed through space and time, and how loops of discrimination and privilege traverse individuals. In his note, Shield (this issue) draws attention to intersectionality in subcultures as expressed in virtual interactions when using the socio-sexual app Grindr. Specifically, he documents how discrimination takes place at the intersection of gay identity and other social categories, and comments on the affordances of app tools used to signify one's socio-sexual preferences. In such a perspective, identity work is not only a function of individual agency and discursive opportunities but is also swayed by technological affordances. In her conclusion to Gender Trouble, Butler comments that:

> This illimitable et cetera, however, offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorizing. If identity is asserted through a process of signification, if identity is always already signified, and yet continues to signify as it circulates within various interlocking discourses, then the question of agency is not to be answered through recourse to an "I" that preexists signification. (Butler, 1990: 143-144)

This directs us to consider identity as a practice, as something that is done, and agency as exercised in the interstices created by the ongoing repeated performance of a given (intersectional) identity, displacing that identity and the power relations the subject is inscribed into (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1982). In line with this, in this special issue Christensen discusses and provides us with a convincing illustration of how intersectionality can inspire poststructuralist projects, as he recursively acknowledges the social existence of categories while suggesting to 'storm' these very norms. Such an attempt could be criticized by some as being a hijacking of structural ideas into another paradigm, yet perfectly aligns with the queer approach of denying stability and permanence to paradigms themselves. Finally, Liu (this issue) addresses the challenges of studying structurally oppressed identities while adopting a reflexive stance on our own embodied marginality/privilege with regards to particular intersections.

Intersectional thinking: From the individual to the commons

Besides the above-mentioned debate about categories and categorization, the projects tied to specific intersections are also a point of controversy. Indeed, the multiplication of categories described above suggests that these identified social groups can be the basis for differentiated struggles for equality. A number of authors vigorously argue for the even consideration of all emancipatory projects, since not doing so would again verse into a logic of domination (e.g. Hancock, 2007). Yet, other scholars warn against the supposed equal, universal value of all intersections and the related power struggles. For example, Walby et al. (2012) contend that intersectional research tends to overlook the ontology of unequal social relations, and relatedly suggest that 'some social relations of inequality are more important than others in structuring the environment which shapes these social relations' (Walby et al., 2012: 234).

As a corollary to this debate around the hierarchy or equality of struggles, one has to consider the implications for change projects. Are particular forms of discrimination and prejudice better addressed at their exact intersection and location, or is a holistic approach more effective? In terms of theorization and illustration, there is little doubt of the interest to explore and expose the complex ways in which power is exercised. This question, however, is more disputed with regards to enacting and enforcing change in practice. Is a universal, democratic project unattainable? Are intersection-specific struggles fruitful? This is reminiscent of the critique of identity politics as fragmenting, as operating another kind of reification, a critique which has recently developed traction in the public debate (Lilla, 2017; Nash, 2016). Such voices criticize the lack of attention to 'the commons', to a democratic project that can only be jointly built, yet without acknowledging possible biases in defining what this project would encompass and who would lead it. The challenge is thus to find fertile ground for change between pointing out that public space is defined and governed by those in power and be tempted to withdrawing from this space, and a rather naïve idea that goodwill and the societal acknowledgement of the existence of inequality are sufficient to conduct inclusive work on a democratic project.

While Crenshaw (1989; 1991) separates the political and theoretical aspects of intersectionality, by discussing feminism and intersectionality in the context of the 2016 US presidential election, in her note for this special issue Ulus shows how they collide, are intertwined; one could be tempted to say: how they intersect. This colliding is, she argues, not only observed in deliberate acts, but also in fantasies:

> Unconscious fantasies to fulfil wishes, needs, desires – and the defences that are invoked, when fantasies are threatened and stimulate anxieties – these interconnecting dynamics, occurring unconsciously, provide remarkable analytic

> connectivity for confronting the contested meanings of feminism in daily political practices. I contend that fantasies fuel the priorities that are given to specific feminist public enactments, for instance in mainstream, corporate-supported spaces, privileging some voices and attempting to smother others – with material consequences. (p. 165)

Other streams of the literature have focused more on how institutions produce these intersections. In that sense, individuals or groups are merely the sites in which we can empirically observe the intersections. In specific contexts, under specific institutional logics, specific intersections will be foregrounded, and some intersections – and the related change projects – will get more or less attention, constraining individuals' and groups' ability to act on discrimination. Aligned with such a perspective, in this issue Styhre experiments with intersectionality as a supplement to analyses grounded in institutional theory and its derivatives such as institutional logics, institutional entrepreneurship, or institutional work.

Institutions and elites are also at the heart of the interview with Philomena Essed conducted by Sara Louise Muhr (Essed and Muhr, this issue) and the response by Martin Parker (this issue) that is especially attentive to race, privilege, and the public space. This can be seen as a continuation of the arguments put forward by Carmichael (later known as Ture) and Hamilton about black power and the existence of institutional racism (Ture and Hamilton, 1967/1992), as well as of Foucault's 1976 series of lectures at the Collège de France in which he discussed the existence of a racisme d'Etat, literally 'State racism' (Foucault, 1997). To start with, such concepts want to make explicit that the more important issue is not that specific individuals are racist or display racist behaviour, but that the State itself can function on racist foundations. Yet, in institutional (or systemic) racism, the state is not deliberately developing racist laws or explicitly deploying its power based on a racist ideology – which would rather make it a 'racist state' – as was the case with segregationist countries such as South Africa, the USA, or Nazi Germany, and as still is the political aspiration of a number of right-wing, nationalistic parties across Europe and beyond. Rather, it is argued that this form of racism is both long-ingrained and at times nearly invisible. Such countries can even have developed anti-racist legislation, while the functioning of institutions still reinforce inequalities based on a binary opposition between the norm and the 'other' based on the social construction of race. At the individual or group level, this results in what sociologists call racialization (see for example Murji and Solomos, 2005). This discussion has, for example, recently resurfaced in France, following the organization of 'non-mixed' events by groups of Muslim female students or the Afrofeminist (the French term for black feminists) collective Mwasi. In November 2017, writer and activist Rokhaya Diallo was barred from a national council following complaints that she had publicly referred to the existence of institutional racism in France. The discussion is also vivid in Denmark

and crystallizes around the notion of national identity and its genealogical/genetic foundation.

Overall, this displacement of the focus from the individual to institutions offers fruitful avenues for future research as it deviates the 'burden' for action from affected individuals or groups. In the same vein as institutional racism, concepts such as patriarchy or ableism indirectly suggest that if individuals or groups can adopt and reproduce discriminatory behaviours or ideas, it is also because they are available and validated as a discourse in a given context. This is what Essed calls 'entitlement racism' (Essed and Muhr, this issue), a notion that undoubtedly deserves further scholarly attention. In addition, this calls for work paying close attention to institutional contexts when considering intersectionality as countries differ as to their institutional approach to constructing the racialized 'other' (Tatli et al., 2012; Wrench, 2012).

Introducing the papers

This special issue features four articles, three notes, as well as a commented interview; two book reviews end this issue to give us inspiration for more reading. We hereafter give the reader a brief overview of the different contributions.

To start with, Stefanie Ruel, Albert Mills and Janice Thomas address the challenge of using the concept of intersectionality throughout the research design rather than confining it to a theoretical frame. In their own words, they want to 'put intersectionality to work'. They take a specific interest in the workplace marginalization experienced by Ruth Bates Harris, who was not only the first black senior manager ever hired by NASA but also the first woman. Her case is approached through a critical sensemaking framework, which is used both to reconstruct her story from archival data and to analyse it. Beyond intersecting social identities based on phenotypical traits, the authors exemplify that studying an organizational participant from an intersectional perspective also means studying their socio-historical situatedness and the related institutional and organisational discourses that shape identities.

Alexander Styhre also looks into identity construction through the prism of intersectionality, albeit the focus is here on professional identities at the intersection of heterogeneous sets of norms and organizational arrangements. In particular, Styhre argues that there has been too limited attention given to elite identities and how intersectionality plays out in the related identity work. In this article, Styhre gives specific attention to life science professionals working for small, start-up type companies which are highly dependent on access financial

capital to continue to innovate. An intersectional analysis of the material shows that these professionals both dissociate themselves from other actors in the field, yet are dependent on their norms, practices and resources. This undermines the possibility for a coherent self-identity and demands constant work with heterogeneous resources.

Helena Liu goes in a quite different direction in her methods-centred piece. Rather than arguing for the stretching of intersectionality, Liu pleads for its re-radicalisation; this re-radicalisation is necessary if organisation studies want to use intersectionality as more than a 'totemic symbol'. In particular, Liu advocates for a more sensitive contextualisation of struggles and aligning of researcher and subject standpoints. Attention to biography and history are thus proposed as methodological remedies. Liu illustrates her argument with examples from a study of Chinese Australian leaders, as an oppressed yet relatively privileged group. Biography and history notably allow to create fruitful rapport with the interviewees and gather rich data about social identification processes and identity performance in complex systems of domination. More broadly, Liu's contribution raises the complex question of who can speak about and research intersectionality.

Jannick Friis Christensen also has his core interest in methods with relations to intersectionality, although his proposition asks us to look beyond intersectionality in order to fruitfully deliver on the related aims of change and power-states disruption. Based on a joint reading of the literature about critical performativity and queer theory, Christensen proposes a norm-critical method that can be actioned in both research and practice. This method aims at overcoming the challenge of how to discuss categories without reifying them. Christensen details how this method is derived from intervention methods developed in practice by a non-profit association as well as by a collective of Danish trade unions and focuses on work related to the LGBT+ people. The detailed examples create a rich agenda for both academics and practitioners and pushes the agenda for intersectionality beyond identity politics by seeing equating queer performativity with ephemeral intersectionality.

The note section is equally rich in contributions addressing intersectionality as theory, methods, and politics. The section starts with Annette Risberg and Katharina Pilhofer's reflection over categories and categorisation. They discuss how these tools are used in intersectional scholarship as well as in the broader body of diversity and difference research. Rather than taking the standpoint that categories have to be abandoned, they acknowledge the inevitability of categorisation in human socialization, and rather try to contrast problematic uses with fruitful avenues. In particular, they draw attention to the assumptions and stereotypes that can be attached to widely used categories such as race or gender.

In turn, they advocate for a use of categories that pays conscious attention to how and by whom they are developed, that is to say acknowledging power structures and power relations.

Andrew Shield addresses multiple intersections experienced by non-heterosexual immigrants and looks at such intersectionality in the context of virtual encounters facilitated through a popular socio-sexual mobile application called Grindr. Shield to consider this virtual space as a rich site for gaining new insights into the complexity of gay culture. Thanks to his online and face-to-face data collection, Shield unveils some of the interrelations of race, gender and sexual orientation that lead to complex patterns of inclusion and exclusion on Grindr, where oppressed sub-groups (e.g. Asians or Muslims) can themselves display discriminatory behaviour (e.g. towards 'feminine' or transgender users). In addition, the data analysis shows how app-specific affordances such as drop-down menus reinforce categorization. Yet, it is also highlighted that some users explicitly use an anti-discrimination discourse in their profiles, opening up research avenues about user-led remedial work.

Next, Eda Ulus' note takes the form of an inflammatory essay on 'white feminist fantasies'. In particular, Ulus denounces the continued exclusion from the political arena of women of colour, and by extension the exclusion of their struggles and societal projects. Ulus also extends the debate to contrasting intersectional feminism with neoliberal feminism, questioning the latter's legitimacy as a form of feminism. These white fantasies are explained thanks to psychoanalytical tools such as narcissism as well as the Freudian concept of defence mechanisms, in which fantasies are a form of denial when individuals are faced with a threat to their beliefs. The essay's red thread is the 2016 presidential election in the United States of America, and more specifically the case of Hillary Clinton, whose candidacy was repeatedly appraised as a triumph for women and for feminism. Ulus ends her piece with what could be seen as her personal intersectional feminist manifesto.

In addition to the contributions in the form of articles or notes, this special issue also includes an interview feature. Sara Louise Muhr interviewed Philomena Essed on entitlement racism and its intersections. Intersectionality is explicitly related to specific institutional contexts, in which certain groups of individuals feel free to say whatever they want about whomever they want, that is to say where privilege groups use racist discourses or display racist behaviour on the deceptive premise that this is about freedom of speech (as a universal and absolute right). Essed further discusses the effects on individuals, in particular humiliation and what it means that a person feels humiliated. Finally, she reflects on neighbouring concepts such as entitlement sexism, and about ways to conduct inclusive activism.

Martin Parker offers a comment on her reflections, based on this interview as well as on their previous interchange during a seminar held at Copenhagen Business School in 2017. Parker develops an analogy with the Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park (London) and Oosterpark (Amsterdam) to reflect on who is granting the freedom to speak, in what institutional context, thus highlighting the relational dimension and situatedness not only of rights but also of the human condition.

Finally, this issue features two book reviews: Kirsty Janes considers subject boundaries and communication through her reading of Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation by L. Blackman, and Toni Ruuska takes us into the 'post-apocalyptic' with her take on A. Allen's The Cynical Educator.

We hope that the reader will share our proud sentiment that this special issue testifies to the vitality of research about intersectionality in and around organizations. Intersectionality came about as a necessary reaction to universalist and democratic projects built on systems of exclusion, including feminist ones, and which are not sufficiently questioned to this day. To contribute to more social justice in and around organizations, we thus want to end this introduction by encouraging you to engage scholarly with the research avenues and methodological tools authors proposed and debated in this special issue, and even more so to take a participatory, if not activist approach to intersectionality in order to 'walk the talk' (see also Ashcraft and Muhr, 2017; Contu, 2017; Just et al., 2017).

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Intersectionality at work: The case of Ruth Bates Harris and NASA*

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abstract

One challenge we face as diversity and gender scholars is how to apply intersectionality in organizational studies. We present one possible application of intersectionality to demonstrate that it can be put to work beyond the bounds of theorization alone. To achieve this goal, we focused on the organizational experiences of Ruth Bates Harris, the first woman and the first African American hired to a senior management position at the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (U.S. NASA). We recreated Bates Harris retrospectively, via a plausible story, by applying the critical sensemaking (CSM) framework. We then analyzed this story by applying once again the CSM framework with a focus on: (1) intersecting identity (micro) (re)constructions; (2) the rules surrounding NASA occupational roles, vague professional practices, and financial resources, and the influence of these rules on identity reconstructions; and, (3) two dominant social values in the Cold War-Civil Rights era, and their relationship to the marginalization of an individual. The analysis of the plausible story, resulting in the recreation of a complex individual via her range of anchor points and the influence of NASA's rules, meta-rules and social values on her identities, contributes to our understanding of how to put intersectionality to work.

Introduction

The application of intersectionality is not an easy notion to consider. Intersectionality can be defined along identity[1] categories such as race[2], gender[3], ethnicity, etc., that are interdependent and that constitute each other (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). This intersection of identity categories can position individuals in society, creating an order. Intersectionality scholarship provides a powerful framework for studying how individuals are 'invariably multiply positioned through differences in gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national belonging and more' (Davis, 2014: 17). How we apply these ideas within an empirical study remains a major issue however. Many have attempted to put intersectionality to work; some have been successful, while others have struggled to address the dual notions of intersecting identity categories and the attendant outcome of an order. We undertook this study to contribute to the strategic application of this intersectionality heuristic, to put intersectionality to work beyond the theoretical debates that have governed much of the literature (Hearn and Louvrier, 2015; Mercer et al., 2015). The research question that drove this strategic application was: how does an individual, who is discursively created and reproduced, come to be marginalized in the workplace? Our research objective was to demonstrate that intersectionality can be put to work with respect to reconstructing and representing an individual's lived social reality.

To achieve this research objective, we reconstructed the Glenn (2004) anchor points concept. Anchor points are intersecting identity categories that are discursively created and recreated. An anchor point secures meaning, for a brief, fleeting period of time, so that we may consider the order that is fashioned through this meaning. An anchor point mirrors Ibarra's 'provisional selves' (1999: 765), where an individual may present themselves, or be created by others, as one self,

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[1] Identity, from a sociological perspective, is an amalgam of self-identity and social-identity. Self-identity is our own sense of self (Watson, 2008). Social-identity consists of inputs into our own self-identity (*ibid.*). These inputs are socially constructed and manifested in discourses via interactions with others. When we refer to identity in this paper, we are referring to social-identity specifically.

[2] To recognize the socio-political characterizations of individuals (Weeks, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Acker, 2006), we capitalized the terms 'White' and 'Black' – where African American is used interchangeably with Black - to reflect 'cultural allegiances', (Ladson-Billings, 1998: 9). In direct quotes from this study's protagonists, however, their own discursive uses reflect the source; so *'black', 'colored', 'female'* may appear, and are italicized as shown here.

[3] The terms 'woman' and 'man' are used to encompass the cultural, gendered-experience that is attributable to these social positions.

and then move to another self (re)creation. An individual[4] clearly does not live in a vacuum, and so identity anchor points must be put in context. Context in this study was built from the workplace, not as a stable structure, but via changing organizational rules and meta-rules, and social values that can influence discourses and discursive practices. Finally, discourse is a concept constructed as sets of statements and practices that bring an individual, an object, or set of objects into being (Parker, 1992).

Drawing on postmodern archival research (Mills and Helms Mills, 2018), we studied the case of Ruth Bates Harris within the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (U.S. NASA). We traced her experience, as the first African American and the first woman hired as a senior manager, within the early 1970's NASA. The discursive processes that (re)created Bates Harris, from her arrival within the NASA Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) office in 1971, her dismissal in 1973, and her return to NASA in 1974, were compelling. Analysis of these discourses involved the critical sensemaking (CSM) framework by Helms Mills et al. (2010). The heuristic of CSM is comprised of a study of discourses (Foucault, 1980), of organizational rules (Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991), and of formative contexts or social values (Unger, 1987a; 1987b). We used CSM to first construct a plausible story of Ruth Bates Harris. Then we applied CSM, as an analytical framework, to this story. CSM provided us then with an avenue to focus on an organizational reality, and its impact on the (re)creation of an individual.

We begin this paper by presenting the application of intersectionality via anchor points. We follow this theoretical framework with our chosen methodology for this study. We then submit our plausible story of Ruth Bates Harris, and the results of our analysis of this story. We ask and answer the ever important 'so what?' question, framing our answers with an eye to what our contribution consists of with respect to the application of intersectionality.

Application of intersectionality via anchor points

As the editors of this special issue presented, Crenshaw (1989; 1991) introduced intersectionality as a lens built on the varied identity, and intersecting systems of power research (Collins, 2009). Crenshaw applied intersectionality to examine specifically the interaction of race and gender, and the resultant exclusion of Black women within the judiciary. There were also important influences to

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[4]   The notion of an individual is influenced by Foucault's technology of self where the 'subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation, of liberty...on the basis, of course, of a number of rules, styles, inventions to be found in the cultural environment' (Foucault, 1988: 50-51).

intersectionality scholarship from critical race studies (The Combahee River Collective, 1979; hooks, 1981; Hull et al., 1982; King, 1988) where the Black Woman was inserted as a theoretical wedge into traditional White feminist work (Nash, 2008). Crenshaw's important legislative work, and the theoretical work of others in this field (for e.g. Staunæs, 2003; Glenn, 2004; Lykke, 2005; McCall, 2005; Collins, 2009; Cho et al., 2013; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 2015), led to a suite of empirical qualitative and quantitative studies on intersectionality in such areas as: feminist and postfeminist studies within the workplace (Coleman and Rippin, 2000; Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Meyerson and Kolb, 2000; Torres, 2012); studies of men (Hearn, 2014); ethics (Van Herk et al., 2011); educational studies (Naples, 2009); transnational/postcolonial studies (Mohanty, 1988; Calás et al., 2013); and, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender studies (Stone, 2006; Bowleg, 2008).The challenges that some of these intersectionality scholars (such as McCall, 2005; Bowleg, 2008) encountered with respect to the application of intersectionality led us to consider how we could apply intersectionality in such a way to increase its usability within organizational studies.

Glenn's (2004) original work surrounding anchor points offered us one possible avenue to address this usability challenge. Anchor points are intersecting identity categories, that are discursively created and recreated. Anchor points also encompass the act of their creation, via power-relations among individuals, and these individuals' own sensemaking processes. Power-relations, used here in the Foucauldian sense, exist locally in day-to-day interactions, are continuous, productive and are 'capillary' (Fraser, 1989: 22). Power-relations circulate throughout the entire social body, down to the smallest practice. Power-relations cannot be possessed but they can be deployed in discourses; thus, they can be disciplinary in nature, creating order and establishing boundaries (Talbot, 2010). Sensemaking, on the other hand, works hand-in-hand with power-relations, 'unfold(ing) as a sequence in which people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage [in] ongoing circumstances from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively, while enacting more or less order into those ongoing circumstances', (Weick et al., 2005: 409).

Glenn's (2004) anchor points concept were also built on binary narratives of White versus the Other, and on discourses of 'denial, accusation and confession' (Friedman, 1995: 7). She specifically captured these 'accusations and confessions' within her understanding of the concept of relationality. The relationality concept can be constructed by women and men, of varying ethnic and racial backgrounds (Friedman, 1995), with the goal of looking at relationships between different phenomena. Relationality considers '...identity as situationally [*sic*] constructed and defined and at the crossroads of different systems of alterity and stratification' (Friedman, 1995: 17). Collins and Bilge (2016), however, stressed that the idea

behind relationality is to remove the 'either/or' binary of studying individuals. In other words, we are urged to move away from men versus women, White versus Black, poor versus rich characterizations of a social order. This is done in such a way to move towards a study of interconnections (Collins and Bilge, 2016). Relationality is also, importantly, dependent on power-relations, in the day-to-day interactions among individuals, and can reflect both productive and disciplinary interconnections.

The anchor point concept was based on a construction of relationality whereby Glenn saw Black and woman as identities gaining meaning in relation to each other. This meaning was nebulous, depending on the power-relations that were at play. She also constructed the anchor point as being in hierarchal opposition: so White was the dominant category over Black, and Man was genderless in relation to Woman. Furthermore, her use of relationality included the bond of occupational identities that an individual may take on, such as housekeeper responsibilities. Creating an anchor point – a Black housekeeper woman – according to Glenn then secured meaning in such a way that we can consider the order that is (re)created through this meaning. Ultimately, the study of anchor points allowed Glenn to study the detrimental consequences of the lived experience of the Other.

This definition of anchor points, we contend, ignores the complexities of power-relations and of discourses. Glenn broke down interrelations among individuals to whether someone was White or someone was Black, whether someone was a Woman or a Man. This implied an additive nature to identity relationships, which ignored the fundamental idea behind intersectionality; namely, the very complexity of our intersecting identity categories, how they are interdependent, and how they constitute each other. By embracing Glenn's treatment of relationality, we would be perpetuating the idea that one single identity category added to another was responsible for the ordering among individuals. If the anchor points concept was to realize its potential, reflecting a complex individual and their lived, ordered experience, this concept had to be reconstructed based on the very complexity of individuals, embracing intersectionality, and the context they find themselves in.

Reconstructing anchor points

We chose to rebuild the concept of anchor points based on discourses and power-relations found in rules, meta-rules, and social values. Rules, meta-rules, and social values mirror the complexities of a lived experience, moving away from the binary representations that Glenn captured in her interpretation of relationality. Specifically, rules and meta-rules function as a pre-existing framework determining how things get done (Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991). Social values,

similarly, limit and set boundaries on how individuals imagine what can be, and what can be done, within that social reality (Unger, 1987a, 1987b). Dominant social values paired with rules and meta-rules can be represented in symbols, metaphors, and narratives within institutionalized practices (Hartt et al, 2012).

Returning to the intersectionality, this heuristic includes the notion of boundaries and of limits. Specifically, the discursive reproduction of intersecting identities, and the sensemaking surrounding this reproduction, can result in the temporary movement to the periphery of an individual. For example, Monture (1986) provided a powerful story of her movement to the periphery within a conference setting which has its own rules and social values. This individual became the Other within that specific context. This movement can be referred to as marginalization, where there was 'deficiency in the…political, and social resources used to guarantee access to the rights and privileges assumed by dominant group members' (Cohen, 1999: 37-38). Intersecting identity categories along with discourses, power-relations, and sensemaking processes all captured within the reworked anchor points concept, can then be used 'in tracing how certain people seem to get positioned as not only different but also troublesome and, in some instances, marginalized' (Staunæs, 2003: 101). The act of ordering is then created/recreated via the discursive production of the anchor point, and the sensemaking of both the creator and the recipient of the anchor point.

Anchor points, as we reconstructed them, are discursively created and recreated identities. They include power-relations among individuals, and these individuals' own sensemaking processes. Anchor points secure meaning, for a brief period of time, within and influenced by a context represented by rules, meta-rules, and social values. The deployment of these anchor points, via discourses and the capillary nature of power-relations, can produce and impose limits that (re)create an order. For example, someone may identify a Black woman who is dependent financially on her partner as one possible anchor point. This anchor point highlights the intersection of race, gender, and socio-economic status as a class. This same person for whom someone has discursively created this anchor point – a financially-dependent Black woman – represents Crenshaw's (1991) empirical findings whereby this individual is treated differently within a legislative context. This being said, this same individual can have other anchor points such as a working mother, influenced by the context, discourses and power-relations at play. This possible range of anchor points is represented in Figure 1.
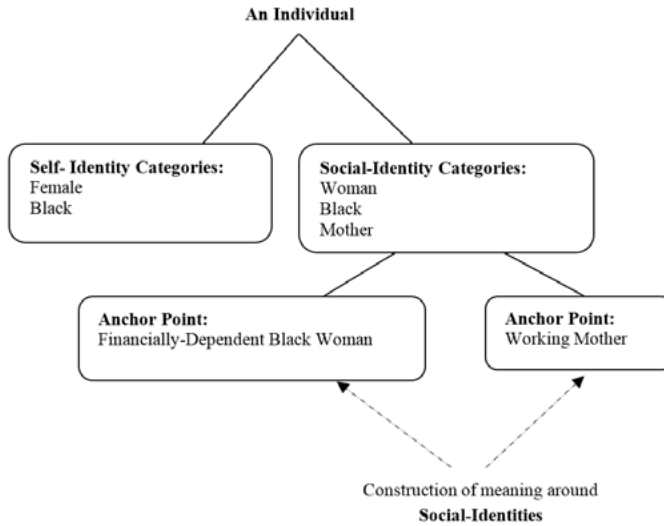
Figure 1: Anchor Points Example

Methodology

We recognized that to bring into evidence this intersectionality theoretical framework, centered on anchor points, the methodology would need to support this initiative rather than hinder it. The chosen methodology would also have an important relationship with the nature of the data set collected. To elaborate on this point, we begin this section with a presentation of the archival data set. We follow this with a presentation of Helms Mills et al.'s (2010) CSM framework, which provided us with the appropriate ontological and epistemological support to analyze the data collected. We close this methodological section with how we applied this CSM heuristic first to create the Ruth Bates Harris plausible story, and then, second, to analyze this story.

Nature of the data set

The data set was built via an iterative process, based on one of the authors' past research experience with the early 1970's U.S. Congressional and Senate hearing transcripts. By reviewing these various transcripts, which were hundreds of pages long and that reflected the interests of a number of groups and of independent parties, the multi-voiced narratives were narrowed down to what we considered to be key U.S. NASA senior management actors. In this way, we were able to gather key discursive artifacts, and to define a time span that would engage, as opposed to overwhelm, the reader into the discovery of Ruth Bates Harris. U.S. NASA's Deputy Administrator George M. Low's (Low, 1970) extensive archival records,

including a document and photographic collection of one-hundred and seventy-two boxes, housed at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), were added to this data set. Numerous discussions with the extremely helpful, and competent, RPI archival staff facilitated the first author to gain a better understanding of the nature and the organization of the archival records that RPI housed. Following this experience at RPI, the data set grew to include various news media reports from the time period in question. These news media reports were available online, via an extensive U.S. database of local and national media outlets. The data set was deemed complete with the exciting discovery of an autographed copy of Bates Harris' (1991) autobiography.

Throughout this process of collecting data, methodological standards were applied to ensure soundness, traceability, and evidentiary value in line with Mills and Helms Mills (2018) postmodern archival research guidelines. Specifically, a field research diary and a running database of known, and unknown, RPI box contents were maintained by the first author while at RPI. Subsequently, photocopies and notes (i.e. on the photocopies, emails, etc.) were maintained in hard copy format in a series of four binders. Finally, extensive communication among the authors was enacted throughout this research initiative.

Critical sensemaking framework

The CSM framework (Helms Mills et al., 2010) guided our analysis by helping us to focus on four heuristics that are intertwined. This framework is specifically shaped from the interaction of Weick's (1995) sensemaking, Foucault's (1978; 1980) discourses, Mills and Murgatroyd's (1991) context of organizational rules, and Unger's (1987a; 1987b) formative contexts. CSM goes in a different direction from Weickian sensemaking, where the four heuristics working together create an analysis framework for how people come to understand 'things', 'objects', etc. Furthermore, the interaction of these heuristics is the key idea here; there is no structural, or procedural, step-function among sensemaking, discourses, rules and meta-rules, and formative contexts.

Weickian sensemaking (1995), previously defined in the application of intersectionality, and its seven properties, namely identity construction, retrospective, relying on extracted cues, plausibility, enactment of the environment, the social interaction with others, and that it is ongoing, are all important considerations in the experiences of an individual within an organization. Weick's (1993) analysis of the stories surrounding firefighters that would not/could not drop their tools, as they were an integral part of these men's identities, led to important avenues of understanding in meaning making and the importance of identity. The analysis work in this study is not however based on

Weickian sensemaking alone, but on critical sensemaking. Where Weickian sensemaking 'starts' out at a shock or crisis event, the heuristic of critical sensemaking does not need this shock to be able to study an organization (Helms Mills et al., 2010). This critical sensemaking, an analytical method that embraces power-relations and context, 'looks at actions and beliefs as driven by plausibility not accuracy' (Helms Mills et al., 2010: 189). Furthermore, critical sensemaking embraces Foucauldian discourses, and its influence on Weickian sensemaking.

With respect to these Foucauldian discourses, they and their processes are a way to bring an object into being. They also offer a way of structuring the social world into a useable and manageable pattern where we can make sense of events. Foucauldian discourse is related to mundane social life[5] , and to social knowledge creation and recreation. Social life and social knowledge includes historical genealogies, as Foucault showed in his numerous works (e.g. Foucault, 1977; 2001). Social realities, viewed via interactions among individuals, cannot be understood without investigating those discourses that are present in that reality (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Discursive processes similarly encompass 'everyday attitudes and behavior, along with our perceptions of what we believe to be reality' (Grant et al., 1998: 2). Discursive processes centered on identity, anchor points in our case, are made available to us as social constructions that impart knowledge. These processes ultimately constrain the sensemaker within a social reality 'to seek out familiar solutions that have worked in the past...and [that] maintain the social status quo' (Helms Mills and Mills, 2009: 175).

Discourses can also reproduce and reflect rules, meta-rules and formative contexts, providing a sense of order for individuals within a particular social reality. Just as sensemaking and discourses work together, so too Mills and Murgatroyd's (1991) institutional rules and meta-rules work in concert with Unger's (1987a; 1987b) formative contexts. Meta-rules are defined as system-wide rules such as globalization, economic systems, employment equity legislation within Canada or Affirmative Action legislation in the U.S. Demographics, an exercise in statistical structuring of individuals into groups of information, is another example of a meta-rule. Meta-rules are broad in scope and in application, and can 'represent points of intersection between numbers of formative contexts' (Helms Mills et al., 2010: 190).

With respect to organizational rules, Mills and Murgatroyd (1991) highlighted that organizational rules function as a pre-existing framework determining how 'things get done'. This state of pre-existence does not imply that these rules are not

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[5]   Social life refers to the 'interconnected networks of social practices of diverse sorts (economic, political, cultural, family and so on)' (Fairclough, 2001: 27).

influenced by the agency of individuals; the issue is not that we are trying to identify rules creation, but that they exist and that we can 'see' them, and study their influence on the everyday activities of individuals. Rules are social constructions (Mills and Murgatroyd, 1991), and impose orderings in the power-regime that are organizations. Organizational rules may limit how individuals within an organization act thus constraining them in their mundane, daily existence within the organization.

Formative contexts reflect dominant assumptions captured within the idea of social values (Unger, 1987b). They bring together dominant social values with individual action (Helms Mills et al., 2010). Dominant assumptions, for example, in these social values can be produced, reproduced, and reflected in discourses. These formative contexts can limit and set boundaries on how individuals as sensemakers imagine what can be, and what can be done, within a social reality. In this process of imagining the possible, the power-relations that are at work among individuals, and the power-effects, can be examined via discursive processes. Specifically, individuals within an organization can express institutionally dominant social values through narratives and stories. These organizational narratives can capture the said and the unsaid. These organizational narratives are not necessarily presented in a constant stream of information but rather, can be characterized as interrupted evidence. The evidence ultimately must be constituted back together by the interpreter to be able to study this uncoordinated cluster of power-relations (Flyvbjerg, 2012). The interpreter's responsibility is to tease out the underlying assumptions presented in these discourses. The challenge then becomes to analyze not only the narratives and stories themselves but to also look at what the discourses protect (*ibid.*).

The beauty of the CSM framework is its focus on discourses. Social realities cannot be understood without investigating discourses that are practiced, and that influence other discourses in that reality (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Discourses centred on an individual's identities reflect power-relations that flow through the social. They also give meaning to social life. Specifically, these identity discursive acts, working in tandem with sensemaking, constrain the individual 'to seek out familiar solutions that have worked in the past...and [that] maintain the social status quo' (Helms Mills and Mills, 2009: 175). These familiar solutions are influenced, in part, by institutional rules and meta-rules, and formative contexts. CSM therefore provides a framework to study discourses, weaving in an individual's sensemaking, institutional rules and meta-rules, and formative contexts all together.

Empirical research using the CSM framework includes an interesting diversity of applications. Thurlow's (2007) study of discourses at a community college found

that individuals' made sense of organizational change via many interconnected avenues, including the centrality of identity. Carroll et al.'s (2008) study of call centres, and their managers and employees, applied CSM to privilege plausible understanding of management relationships, power, and resistance. Hartt et al.'s (2012) dual ANTi-History and CSM framework, applied to archival materials, found that history is socially constructed storytelling with respect to gendered relations. Paludi and Helms Mills (2013) exploratory study into Latin American executive women found that navigating differences involved learning about the Other. Finally, Prasad's (2014: 528) autoethnographic experience of Jerusalem framed within CSM analysis 'brought to the level of consciousness my latent acceptance of prejudices that were engendered by a set of ethnocentric discourses'. There are then different possible applications for the CSM heuristic.

Data analysis

Given the extensive historically-based data set in front of us, we discussed how we could best recreate the past within an attainable device that would engage and not overwhelm. We, as postmodernist scholars, were also focused on 'truth' being presented as plausible versus a legitimate fact. To be clear, in the modernist tradition, a historian 'factually' retells the past. We were inspired by Clark and Rowlinson's (2004: 331) 'historic turn' in organization studies to focus on what is plausible. To this end, we drew on the archival data to build a complex portrayal of Ruth Bates Harris via a story. The CSM framework helped us to recreate this individual (micro), the organizational rules and meta-rules (meso), and the formative (macro) contexts. In other words, we identified three key areas that would assist in recreating Ruth Bates Harris: discursively produced anchor points, NASA rules, and Civil Rights-Cold War values contexts.

Once our plausible story was created, we again reached to the CSM framework to analyze this story. We recognized that to understand a social reality we could not limit our analysis to 'just' an individual's anchor points. Social reality is much too complex to only look at it in this way. Thus, with respect to individual (re)constructions, we began by analyzing the discursive processes involved in the (re)creation of Ruth Bates Harris' anchor points. We analyzed the story with a focus on identity (re)construction to ensure that, first the individual was not 'lost', and second, that the anchor points' relationship to power-relations was examined.

One example of our application of CSM involves looking at the pre-NASA hiring time period of the story. One of Bates Harris' anchor points centered on job title discourses comes forward in these two excerpts:

> Director of Equal Employment Opportunity [EEO] and Contract Compliance, NASA... [was]... to establish goals, procedures, and project activities to implement a

> policy of equal employment opportunity and contract compliance throughout NASA. (U.S. Committee on Appropriations [USCA], 1974: 26)

> In September 1971, Mrs. Ruth Bates Harris, a black female, was appointed as the director, NASA Equal Employment Opportunity. She brings to NASA a distinguished public service career. This change incorporates the EEO function with contract compliance function. Marriage of the two functions allows for greater latitude in operation. (USCA, 1974: 134)

Bates Harris was initially given the job title of 'Director of Equal Employment Opportunity and *Contract Compliance*'[6]. This job titled reflected an attributed occupational role of being a highly-experienced Civil-Rights and Public Servant management professional. She was also recognized as being a '*revolutionary*' in this field of EEO, based on her past experience in training police forces in Washington, D.C., and in being part of Martin Luther King Jr.'s organization committee. In addition, this job title and the occupational role intersected with Bates Harris' social-identities; notably, she was identified as being a '*black female*'. This social-identity categorization was both sex-based, and racially-based. Bates Harris was then reconstructed as a complex individual, with important tensions reflected in her reconstruction.

With respect to organizational rules, we again wanted to focus on the power-relations and the consequences of these power effects. We first examined the discursively produced rules centered on NASA occupational roles, vague professional practices, and financial resources. Second, we considered how these various rules imposed orderings within the organization. Finally, the analysis framework helped us to look at how this limited individual interactions within the particular NASA social reality. For example, looking at the discourses surrounding Bates Harris' change in job title, and in her occupational role, we found underscored what we called the swipe of the pen rule:

> For reasons never fully explained this completed action [of naming Bates Harris Director of EEO and Contract Compliance] was superceded [sic] on the recommendation of the Associate Administrator for Organization and Management [Bernard Moritz], signed by his deputy... Subsequently a Special Announcement was issued assigning the Director of Industrial Relations [Robert King] the additional duty of Director of Equal Employment Opportunity Office and the incoming Human Rights official [Bates Harris], Deputy Director.... The re-titled position was accepted by the candidate [Bates Harris] with great reluctance. (USCSCASS, 1973: 205)

Discourses surrounding the removal of '*Contract Compliance*' and Bates Harris' apparent demotion to Deputy Director doesn't appear to be of much importance

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[6]   Recall that text presented in single quotes and italics reflects the protagonist's narrative.

since the '*Contract Compliance*' part of the title and the associated role it imparted were taken away with a simple swipe of the pen by Moritz. It is important to recognize that Bates Harris hadn't arrived in NASA yet when this demotion occurred. The resultant order, an African American woman '*under*' a White man, a powerful visual and metaphorical representation of this swipe of the pen rule, was accomplished despite the NASA Executive Personnel Board's approval of the original job title.

With respect to formative contexts, we focused on dominant social values as a context unto itself. These dominant social values were represented via the Civil Rights and the Cold War era symbol and metaphor. This analysis focus further addressed the possible power-relations at work within NASA. For example, the Nixon legislative framework change to Title VII, requiring all Federal EEO programs be adopted into the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, resulted in extensive back and forth discussions in the Low archival data set. We summarized the discourses in the plausible story, focusing on NASA Administrator Fletcher's recurring and repeated '*mistakes*' with respect to this legislation, and Bates Harris' role in implementing this Act into the NASA context. We analyzed these discourses and found that the power-relations, in this web of interactions between Fletcher and Bates Harris, demonstrated that there existed limitations to Civil Rights as a social value within NASA. We deconstructed these discourses within a framework of macro concerns. Notably, the dominant assumption of Civil Rights was to correct wrongs in society. However, within NASA walls, this assumption could not transcend their own dominant social values. In other words, Fletcher through his repeated '*mistakes*' and Bates Harris' repeated calls to meet legislative requirements, and their back-and-forth discourses, that lasted months, resulted in imposing an order which Bates Harris' would go to '*war*' against. The impact of these macro Civil Rights NASA discourses on Bates Harris identity were then reflected in another one of her anchor points. She was branded with the anchor point of an '*activist*', much to her frustration and in contrast to her professed self-identity: a self-described '*teacher*' who 'just [wanted] to set workshops and forums to help sensitize people and make them more responsive to others who are different' (Bates Harris, 1991: 214).

Results

We now present the results of our study. We begin with the plausible story of Ruth Bates Harris. We follow with the CSM analysis of this plausible story.

The plausible story: The hiring, firing and rehiring of Ruth Bates Harris

In the early 1970s, the percentage of women (16.5-17%) and minority (4.6-6%)[7] civil service employees in NASA was considerably below the numbers employed by the entire U.S. Federal government (U.S. Congress Senate Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences [USCSCASS], 1973). Within the professional levels – occupational positions classed as engineering, scientists, and professional administrative staff – the percentage of women (3.4%) and minority (2.6%) members of NASA were also noticeably low (U.S. General Account Office [USGAO], 1975). NASA Administrator James Fletcher, aware of these numbers, sent an emissary to approach Ruth Bates Harris to woo her away from her position as director of the Human Relations Commission in the District of Columbia. This wooing was based, in part, on her 'national reputation' (Holden, 1973: 804) as a 'senior civil rights worker' (USCSASS, 1973: 215). Fletcher believed that Bates Harris as a 'top-level official' (USCSASS, 1973: 215) would continue to 'make improvements in minority and female employment within NASA... [by]... press[ing] continuously for improvement' (USCSCASS, 1973: 215-216).

Bates Harris accepted the NASA contract to become, in 1971, the first woman and the first African American hired into a senior management position (Bates Harris, 1991). This contract recommended by the NASA Executive Personnel Board and signed by Administrator Fletcher to become the 'Director of Equal Employment Opportunity [EEO] and Contract Compliance, NASA... [was]... to establish goals, procedures, and project activities to implement a policy of equal employment opportunity and contract compliance throughout NASA' (USCA, 1974: 26). Various national media reports along with NASA local reports cited her new '*Director of EEO and Contract Compliance*' position as a step in the right direction for NASA since it included the responsibility of ensuring external contractor compliance to meet EEO goals across the national space industry along with ensuring NASA's own internal compliance (Mann, 1971; NASA, Ames Research Center, 1971b; 1971a; Holden, 1973; USCSCASS, 1973). NASA statements made before a subcommittee, on fiscal year 1974 Appropriations, would make official Bates Harris position and role in the equal opportunity program:

> In September 1971, Mrs. Ruth Bates Harris, a black female, was appointed as the director, NASA Equal Employment Opportunity. She brings to NASA a distinguished public service career. This change incorporates the EEO function with contract compliance function. Marriage of the two functions allows for greater latitude in operation. (USCA, 1974: 134)

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7   Minority women were counted in both the minority and women groups, thereby artificially inflating the number of employees in each of these categories (U.S. General Account Office, 1975).

Later,

> For reasons never fully explained this completed action was superceded [sic] on the recommendation of the Associate Administrator for Organization and Management [Bernard Moritz], signed by his deputy... Subsequently a Special Announcement was issued assigning the Director of Industrial Relations [Robert King] the additional duty of Director of Equal Employment Opportunity Office and the incoming Human Rights official [Bates Harris], Deputy Director.... The re-titled position was accepted by the candidate [Bates Harris] with great reluctance. (USCSCASS, 1973: 205)

Once installed into this Deputy Director position, Bate Harris recognized that there were some '...deep rooted problems. There were those in responsible positions who only gave lip service to EEO and at times, hardly that' (Bates Harris, 1991: 260):

> The few times spent with the Administrator [Fletcher] or Deputy Administrator [Low] found each to be attentive, and apparently concerned. Nonetheless, many of NASA's problems had been allowed to fester so long that they were numerous, pervasive and difficult to surmount. Many employees had already resigned themselves to the idea that NASA had always been and always will be a haven for white males. (USCSCASS, 1973: 206)

In 1972, mid-way through Bates Harris' tenure at NASA, President Nixon's executive order on Federal EEO programs was adopted into the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. This Act would include public servants into the Civil Rights Act (Title VII), originally put in place in 1964. This amendment to Title VII necessitated changes in EEO reporting structures, requiring a direct link to a head of an agency. Bates Harris brought to Deputy Administrator Low's attention this legislative change, attempting to convince him that '...the EEO office would command more respect and be more effective cosmetically, if the organizational structure showed EEO reporting directly to the Administrator', (Low, 1970 109:7: Meeting Record, December 29, 1972)[8]. While discussions were starting – via numerous meetings and attempts by both Fletcher and Low to find a solution (Low, 1970 68:4: PN #91, April 14, 1973) – Bates Harris noticed 'as usual' (Bates Harris, 1991: 262) that she was the only woman and the only Black at NASA Administrator conferences. She also recognized that Affirmative Action programs across the government were winding down; budgets were no longer available for EEO initiatives and increasing staffing levels were no longer possible. Bates Harris likened NASA EEO initiatives to the metaphor of 'peace and war':

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[8] Convention used for referencing Low's archives is as follows: 'Low, 1970-1974 box X, folder Y, Subject (Memorandum, Notes, Personal Note #, Meeting Record, etc), Date' is shortened to 'Low, 1970 X:Y: Subject: Date'.

> Just as peace is fine as long as there are no wars, EEO is fine as long as there are no complaints. Our office was pushing hard against formidable resistance. There were those who thwarted our efforts to change management policies. There were those who resisted compliance with the new statute, the EEO Act of 1972... Everything was all right as long as government was telling private sector to adopt hiring and promotional programs that were representative of the civilian population, but getting government's house in order was something else. (Bates Harris, 1991: 261)

She continued to press to meet with Administrator Fletcher to 'urge elevation of the [EEO] office beyond the layers of bureaucracy to report directly to him', (Bates Harris, 1991: 262) referring to legislative frameworks and policies to support her arguments. After an initial refusal to change Bates Harris back to a higher position, Fletcher clarified that he had made a mistake and that he did agree to elevate the NASA EEO office. Three different titles were suggested to Bates Harris – Chairman of the NASA Equal Opportunity Council, Special Assistant to the Administrator for Equal Opportunity, and finally Deputy Administrator (Low, 1970 68:5: Memorandum, February 20, 1973; 68:5: Memorandum, March 2, 1973; 68:4: PN #91, April 14, 1973). Bates Harris though had reached a 'watershed' (Bates Harris, 1991: 262); she worried that she was returning to the 1960's Civil Rights unrest and activism. During the 1960's, she had wanted to 'just teach, to set workshops and forums to help sensitize people and make them more responsive to others who are different' (Bates Harris, 1991: 214). Following the campaign to convince Fletcher and Low of the necessity to comply with Nixon's legislation, Bates Harris officially became '*Deputy Assistant Administrator for Equal Opportunity Programs*' at NASA – '...the highest ranking woman in NASA, at a level higher than that of the astronauts' (Bates Harris, 1991: 1, 2, 267). Yet she was 'relieved of duties and given no specific responsibilities' (USCSCASS, 1973: 209).

October 11, 1973, Bates Harris – or simply '*RBH*' as she was referred to now at NASA – was 'terminated' (Low, 1970 61:3: Notebook 1, October 5, 1973) after refusing to resign. This termination was due to any number of reasons depending on who was narrating this part of the story. Extensive and nation-wide media reports claimed 'Mrs. Harris' (Delaney, 1973: 23) was fired due to her scathing report on NASA's efforts to right the wrongs of discrimination against minorities and women (Anderson, 1973; Associated Press, 1973; Beckley Post-Herald, 1973). This report highlighted both NASA's strengths and weaknesses:

> NASA has demonstrated to the world that it has limitless imagination, vision, capability, courage and faith, limitless persistence and infinite space potential. It made the United States a winner in space and improved the quality of life for all people. ... However, in spite of sincere efforts on the part of some NASA management and employees, human rights in NASA have not even gotten off the ground. In fact, Equal Opportunity is a sham in NASA. (Bates Harris/Hogan/Lynn report to Fletcher, September 21, 1973, USCSCASS, 1973: 202)

The Washington Post editorial (1973) gained the attention of members of the U.S Senate, the U.S. Congress, the White House and a number of political and lobbyist groups including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the National Urban League:

> Civil Rights advocates have been fond for years of pointing out the incongruity of a nation's being able to send men to the moon and bring them safely back again without being able to deal very effectively with its racial problems here on earth....NASA Administrator James Fletcher denied the dismissal [of Bates Harris] had anything to do with the starkly candid report. He said, rather, that it resulted from intolerable 'discord and divisiveness' in the equal opportunity office. (Washington Post, Times Herald, 1973: A14)

NASA argued 'that the technical difficulty and urgency of its work make it hard to employ and promote as many women and members of minority groups as it would like' (Independent, 1973: 13), ignoring that NASA external contractors were able to hire three times more minorities. Administrator Fletcher went further stating that '*RBH*' was fired as she 'became a seriously disruptive force' (Low, 1970 67:5: PN #107, November 13, 1973; Memorandum to All NASA employees, November 2, 1973: 2):

> [We] couldn't have the kind of discord and divisiveness there was in that [EEO] office and still accomplish our objectives in this equal opportunity field ... I figured the only way we could solve this divisiveness [was] to ask for Mrs. Harris to resign. (Administrator Fletcher to the Chairmen USCSCASS, 1973: 154)

While media reports plainly stated that 'NASA "discriminates"' (UPI, 1973) referring to Bates Harris as 'uppity' (Rowan, 1973: 4) and the 'top black' (Anderson, 1973; Delaney, 1973; Independent, 1973), Fletcher's stance was to focus on the objective argument of improving the EEO effort itself:

> It is not NASA's policy to in any way discriminate against women. In fact, quite to the contrary, our program is designed to improve the lot of women in NASA in all ways, increase the number of women in NASA, to move them up the ranks in terms of increased responsibility, and so on. The termination of Mrs. Harris' employment had absolutely nothing to do with that. Mrs. Harris was terminated primarily to improve the equal opportunities program in NASA. (Administrator Fletcher speaking to Senator Abourezk, USCSCASS, 1973: 152)

Supporters of RBH, on the other hand, stated that '...she had been discharged because she pressed the agency too much to improve its record' (Delaney, 1973: 23). Democratic South-Dakota Senator James Abourezk, committee member in the U.S. Senate's Aeronautical and Space Sciences, went further with regard to '*Mrs. Harris*' stating 'I'm disturbed at what seems to be a trend that anybody who tries to do his [*sic*] job and is controversial because of it automatically finds himself [*sic*] out of work' (Associated Press, 1973: A2). Former colleagues of RBH added to

this voice, objecting to the Fletcher inference that Bates Harris was following in the footsteps of Angela Davis [9] . Rather, they regarded her as 'thoughtful, reasonable, and easy to get along with' (Holden, 1973: 806).

RBH now 'numb and drained' (Bates Harris, 1991: 2) recounted the day of the firing for the U.S. Committee on Appropriations:

> [Harris] was told by the Administrator that much of the report [she wrote] was factual. She was also told that although it was a difficult decision to make since she was a dedicated person, nevertheless since she had indicated she found the present situation in the EEO office intolerable, he was offering one of two alternatives – either resign or her services would be terminated with severance pay... She was also told that she was impatient... The Administrator during the meeting commented that he thought when she joined NASA she was friendly, however, he felt she had joined others in confrontation. As an example, he considered a 'confrontation' the authors' letter requesting his early decision regarding the report. (Bates Harris testimony, USCA, 1974: 77)

Less than one month after RBH had been terminated, NASA senior managers gathered together to plot the way ahead in the face of the growing storm in the media, in Congress, in the Senate and in the White House. Much to Low's surprise, his senior staff including Mrs. Helen Kupperman from the Counsel's office, recommended that they consider reinstating RBH in some capacity:

> DISCRIMINATION SUIT – ([RBH] would have to prove that we were discrim. on basis of RACE or SEX...CLASS ACTION SUIT – Any third party – damages could be – promotions, etc...
>
> Helen – she stands an almost even chance! (on sex discrim.)
>
> *RECORD of all mtgs w RBH! (*emphasis in original*) (Low, 1970 108:2: Note in Notebook 1, November 15, 1973)

A period of damage control, following the events surrounding RBH's termination, involved a number of repeated presentations by Fletcher and Low to the U.S. Congress and to the Senate, quarterly reports outlining EEO objectives with U.S. Congress and Senate oversight committees. A short ten months later after her termination, as the highest ranking woman in NASA, Bates Harris was reinstated in August 1974. She now was placed into a senior management public relations position, without any EEO responsibilities, at a higher salary than her previous position.

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9   Angela Davis was a noted radical activist, and leading member of the Communist Party of the U.S. at the time.

Analysis of the plausible story

Focusing on the discursive processes within this plausible story, we present the first key area of our analysis, the range of Bates Harris' NASA anchor points. While we could start with either of the other two key areas, namely, NASA rules or Civil-Rights/Cold War formative contexts, we believe that starting at the micro (individual) is more attainable for the reader.

Anchor points: Discursive constructions and reproductions: The (re)creation of Bates Harris, within the NASA organizational context, was accomplished, in part, via job titles and role assignments intersecting with varied identities. A summary of these intersecting social-identities, along with discourses surrounding job titles and role assignments, is presented in Table 1.

Story Signpost	Job Title	Role Assignment	Social-Identity Categories
Pre-NASA Hiring	*'Director of Equal Employment Opportunity and Contract Compliance'*	highly-experienced Civil-Rights professional Revolutionary	a *'black female'*
	'Deputy Director of Equal Employment Opportunity'	*'under'* a White man (Robert King) Limited Revolutionary	African American Woman
Mid-NASA Experience	*'Deputy Assistant Administrator for Equal Opportunity Programs'*	*'friendly'* *'cosmetic elevation'* *'highest ranking woman'* Navigating tension between creating revolutionary change and establishing limits to that revolution	African American Woman
Firing from NASA		*'Mrs. Harris'* *'RBH'* *'joining others in confrontation'* rationality, introspection and *'friendliness'* *'uppity'* *'doing her job'* Civil Activist End of the Revolutionary	*'top black'*

Post-Firing from NASA		'terminating' 'serious disruptive force', 'confrontational' Civil Activist	a 'female' and a 'black'
NASA Re-hiring	Senior Public Relations Officer	'cosmetic' PR	African American Woman

Table 1: Bates Harris' Intersecting Anchor Points Summary

The next anchor point came to light via Bates Harris' attempts to convince Fletcher to follow President Nixon's new legislative norms on equal opportunity. This anchor point was premised on the new NASA job title '*Deputy Assistant Administrator for Equal Opportunity Programs*' intersecting with an African American woman and with the role assignment of being '*friendly*'. In addition, this anchor point was imbued with '*cosmetic elevation*', where no tangible responsibilities were assigned to Bates Harris. This '*cosmetics*' anchor point with its multiple intersections captured, and enclosed, Bates Harris within the superficiality of EEO within NASA. In contrast, and to illuminate this anchor point further, Fletcher could have embraced Nixon's initiative and worked with Bates Harris. Fletcher, in partnership with Bates Harris, could have continued to make revolutionary EEO change within NASA as opposed to creating an interaction between individuals who were beginning a '*war*'.

Moving to the point in the story of Bates Harris' firing, Bates Harris' anchor points were now created and reproduced via role assignments made by a variety of internal and external NASA sources. Namely, internal NASA management, media reports, U.S. legislative bodies, lobbyists and political relations all assigned her a variety of intersecting identities. These included: (a) '*Mrs. Harris*'[10] discursively reflecting her as a married woman in the press, and in Senate hearings; (b) behind NASA closed doors, she had been dehumanized into '*RBH*' while '*joining others in confrontation*'; (c) various references to Bates Harris including '*uppity*' and '*top black*'; (d) rationality, introspection and '*friendliness*' by friends; and, finally (e) a mix of these socially attributed identities intersecting with Bates Harris '*doing her job*'. Interestingly, none of her role assignments talked to her earned higher education (MBA). This is noteworthy given that a common discursive practice for this time for White men, and some Black men, was to be discursively identified as '*a PhD*'. The myriad intersections reflected here highlight confusion,

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[10]   White men, in contrast, were addressed with either their organizational position name prior to their family name (e.g., Administrator) or just their family name (e.g., Fletcher) (e.g., Low, 1970 109:6:Meeting Record, January 5, 1973; 68:5:Memorandum for the record, February 20, 1973).

contradiction, and order seeking of insiders and outsiders to NASA, occurring all at the same time.

Finally, Bates Harris would be recreated discursively again along two distinct, and separate, identity categories during the post-firing period of the story. She would be identified as either '*female*' or as '*black*'. Fletcher, along with his senior management team, reverted to discursive boundaries to make sense of the situation: by '*terminating*' Bates Harris, and discursively assigning to her what Fletcher felt was the NASA 'appropriate identity' (Townley, 1993: 537) of a '*serious disruptive force*', and of being '*confrontational*'. Eventually, Bates Harris would become once again a NASA employee where civil activism would no longer be part of her role assignment. Another boundary within NASA was set, one that would effectively eliminate the '*activist*', and would marginalize Bates Harris into a '*cosmetic*' public relations ordered reality.

NASA's organizational rules: Recognizing that social interactions are much too complex to only look at one aspect in a vacuum, we now turn to NASA's organizational rules and meta-rules. We deconstructed the plausible story via the rules surrounding occupational roles, vague professional practices, and financial resources.

Rules surrounding occupational roles: With respect to Bates Harris' job title, we concentrated our analysis on the 'initial confusion' (USCSCASS, 1973: 158) in 1971 surrounding her hiring, and on the discourses following her firing in 1973/1974. We found that NASA management discourses, in these two instances, promoted a specific kind of thinking. Specifically, the removal of '*Contract Compliance*' from Bates Harris' title doesn't appear to be of much importance since this part of the title could be taken away with a swipe of the pen. However, the resultant order imparted by this swipe of the pen rule – an African American woman '*under*' a White man underscored a powerful visual image. This job title and the resultant image was accomplished despite NASA's Executive Personnel Board approval of the job title, and the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee notification of this job title. The data surrounding this swipe of the pen rule were surprising: in 1971, the removal of '*Contract Compliance*' was done by senior NASA management without their having any level of awareness of what this title meant. Only in anticipation of the U.S. Senate and Congressional hearings looking into Bates Harris' firing did senior management, Low in particular, begin to investigate what '*Contract Compliance*' was, and what it actually meant! This swipe of the pen rule marked to us the beginning of constraining Bates Harris within a lived NASA reality '*under*' a White man, without an indication of awareness by those who applied this rule for what the title actually meant.

With respect to Bates Harris' occupational role within NASA, her role was unclear throughout the discursive evidence found, and recreated in the plausible story. This vagueness highlighted to us the existence of a '*cosmetic*' occupational role rule. Bates Harris' EEO role to report on the status of minorities and women within NASA, could have been a definitive source of information for change within NASA. However, she was not explicitly called upon to do so by senior management. In addition, by '*cosmetically elevating*' Bates Harris, it became clear to us that Fletcher had not expected to be called upon directly to press for change with respect to EEO. This is seen in his various discourses during the post-firing stage of Bates Harris' NASA tenure, where while the EEO report was telling the 'truth' about representation, Fletcher would characterize this 'truth'-telling as being '*confrontational*' and '*unfriendly*'. Bates Harris, on the other hand, either could not see, or did not want to work within, the imposed '*cosmetics*'. She found herself embracing a social activist anchor point, imposed by others, via various discursive acts. As this activist anchor point is central, we expand on its creation and recreation with a consideration of the vague professional rules.

Vague professional practices: We found no discursive evidence of what the NASA EEO changes should be. In the presence of this vague EEO professional practice, we did find discursive evidence that NASA senior management and employees reverted to their own personal professional values. These subjective professional values were relied upon to: '*give lip service to EEO and at times, hardly that*'; being '*attentive*', '*concerned*' but with no action; and, a sense of '*resignation*' that NASA would be a haven for White men with the token status of an African American woman acceptable as long as she was '*friendly*'. Similarly, Bates Harris reverted to her own subjective values, reflected by her return to the 1960's Civil Rights activism experiences, to guide her production of the EEO report for Fletcher. This vague professional practices rule contributed, in part, to how Bates Harris thought she could and had to act, constraining her again to a civil activism anchor point imposed by others. So while there were vague professional practices with respect to EEO and to Bates Harris' occupational role, we found discursive limits imposed on Bates Harris via a variety of subjective professional values embraced within NASA. The tension between these vague professional practices, and the use of subjective values contributed, we believe, to marginalizing Bates Harris further into a civil rights activist. It is important to understand that we are not advocating for professional practices over personal values, or vice versa. What we are highlighting in our analysis is the presence of personal values as a rule, and the lack of discursive evidence with respect to professional practices as another rule.

Rules around financial resources: For NASA, the race to the moon during the Cold War necessitated extensive and ballooning budgets that were unsustainable (De Groot, 2006). Beginning in 1967, and continuing into the period in question in

this study, financial resources were no longer available for many initiatives including EEO. This marked the arrival of austerity as a NASA meta-rule. This was discursively evident with Bates Harris' recognition that government led Affirmative Action programs were winding down. We recognized also that Fletcher and senior management were limited in how they could act within the austerity and EEO initiative meta-rules. Specifically, they were unable to increase funding for such initiatives, or to increase grade-levels, and so hired in lower-grades to increase the '*cosmetics*' of diversity. This resource ordering, coupled with the vague professional practices rule presented above, assisted in defining how things got done in imparting a '*cosmetic*' order. By this very social enactment of '*cosmetics*', an exclusionary reality was recreated within NASA.

Formative contexts of Civil Rights-Cold War era: We consider next in our analysis the Civil Rights/Cold War social values era via the '*peace and war*' metaphor, and the pioneer symbol. This pioneer symbolism was not explicitly stated in the plausible story but is presented here as interrupted evidence. We focused on these two discursive processes to address the social values context, and its influence on Bates Harris' anchor points, beyond the meso considerations of the NASA context alone.

We presented evidence in the plausible story that Fletcher and Low were both '*attentive*' and '*concerned*' with respect to civil rights and NASA EEO efforts. Fletcher had, after all, sought out Bates Harris, a highly-respected professional in EEO, to bring NASA's EEO efforts forward with respect to diversity and inclusion. We were therefore surprised within the mid-NASA storytelling to find evidence that was contrary to the discourses of the early pre-NASA storytelling. The first surprise revolved around the U.S. President Nixon legislative changes that would require NASA to comply with Affirmative Action in the civil service. We were taken aback by the narrative evidence that reflected Fletcher's resistance to the Civil Rights Act (Title VII). The first author initially believed (erroneously) that Affirmative Action in the early 1970's would be an established practice, especially following the U.S. Civil Rights unrest of the 1960's. The extensive back and forth discussions found in the archival data, summarized in the plausible story, between Fletcher and Bates Harris, demonstrated that there were limitations to embracing the social values of civil rights within NASA. Most troubling was Fletcher's repeated and recurring self-identified '*mistakes*' in his discussions with Bates Harris and her responsibilities, and her need to directly report to the NASA Administrator. While we commend Fletcher for admitting his numerous '*mistakes*', we couldn't help but think about his lack of '*mistakes*' in his efforts for the U.S.' continued presence in space. Fletcher and his team of senior administrators were responsible for an extensive suite of technological innovations

including Spacelab, the beginnings of the Space Shuttle, and the Viking and Voyager programs.

The second surprise was with respect to Bates Harris' explicit discursive call to the '*peace and war*' metaphor. This metaphor was, to our minds, a call to civil activism influenced by the NASA rules context previously discussed. This plea mobilized a specific kind of thinking; Bates Harris could have, for example, invoked pacifism along the lines of Martin Luther King Jr.'s type of Civil Rights activism, which she had participated in as an organizer. However, she called to those in the trenches of EEO who must '*push hard against formidable resistance*' to win compliance of '*those who thwarted our efforts*'. This metaphor use, and the legislative changes to EEO, reflected back to us a social enactment of a 'them-versus-us' type of order. This social order was then defined by battle lines, and attempts at conquest, not a 'universal language of peace and brotherhood' (Bates Harris, 1991: 158).

Moving to the Cold War context, we followed the use of the space pioneer symbolism in the archives. This symbol has been extensively used and reflected in the 1960's/1970's discourses of the space race to the moon (see Wolfe, 1979). Fletcher also used pioneer symbolism multiple times when addressing various media, and government entities with respect to space (see USCSCASS, 1973). Fletcher made it clear that he wanted to continue to lead in the pioneering work of space exploration. However, African American women apparently could only stretch this pioneering value so far. The Bates Harris interrupted discursive evidence within the U.S. Congressional and Senate transcripts, in particular, highlighted that 'NASA wasn't ready to see any minority share the responsibility', (USCSCASS, 1973: 205). Similarly, the 'wild-eyed radicals who needed a "safe" white male manager', (USCSCASS, 1973: 205) was as pioneering as Fletcher was prepared to be.

The Washington Post also invoked the pioneer symbolism. Their use of this symbol was within the context of the U.S.'s ability to conquer space and communism. They applied the symbol to all humankind being unable to deal very effectively with its racial problems here on earth; *how can it be that we cannot be pioneers in the realm of racial inequality?* is one question the Post's symbolism use invokes. Similar to Fletcher, the Post's stretching of the pioneer to racial problems had no logical or rational argument provided. This symbolism mobilized a specific kind of agency to promote action. More specifically, the Post's call to action to address racial inequality was one based on an emotionally-charged conquering of communism, by beating the Russians to space in the Cold War. Battle lines were drawn and conquered in space. Racial inequality, however, could not be relegated to a simple conclusion of 'good' vs 'bad', 'Americanism' vs 'Communism'. What is interesting here is that through this simple discursive comparison, the

Washington Post editors made the general public aware of NASA's exclusionary social reality. Political lobbyists, U.S. Senators, U.S. Congressman, the President, the NAACP and the National Urban League were all activated via this grassroots '*call to arms*'. This '*war*' contributed in the long term to the creation of awareness and of willingness on NASA's part to meet legislative requirements over the next 45 years! The infusion of EEO-specific financial resources by Senator Moss, Chair of the Senate's Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences, in particular, would set the stage for long term gains in diversity initiatives at NASA.

So what?

As postmodern researchers, we hold ourselves responsible to shine a light on an individual, a context, an argument, an era, etc., in such a way that a plausible understanding of an event, experience, or a person, can be 'seen'. This plausible understanding does not imply that we are telling one 'truth'; we are bringing forward one possible interpretation among many possible 'truths'. We take this stance to add value, and to contribute to, different ways of looking at social reality. To this end, we identified at the beginning of this paper that our research was focused on considering how an individual comes to be marginalized, and adding to our understanding of the application of intersectionality. We consider these two issues, and what we achieved with respect to each, with this study.

With respect to the marginalized individual, we demonstrated that an individual can be (re)created via anchor points that have meaning, and that impart an order. If we had looked at Bates Harris as just a woman or just an African American, we believe the analysis would not have embraced the complexities of her lived-experience, and of who she was becoming. Describing Bates Harris as just an African American or just as a woman would have, we believe, perpetuated her marginalization as a stereotypical, essentialized Black Woman. Think back, for a moment, to how we introduced this study into Bates Harris, and consider what you as the reader thought initially of Bates Harris. Your perception of her has changed, we hope, following our analysis of the plausible story. Bates Harris was an amalgam of intersecting social-identities that included job titles, and role assignments, that are interdependent and that constitute each other. She was a complex individual who, we believe, must be reflected via more than two distinct identity categories separated out, and ordered, via mundane discourses.

The range of NASA-driven rules – occupational roles, vague professional practices, and financial resources – assisted in our deconstruction of discourses presented in the plausible story. Specifically, we considered how rules interacting with anchor points imposed an order. Bates Harris was placed under a White man, then

elevated to a position with no responsibilities, then branded a Black Woman Civil Activist who was confrontational, and excluded/terminated from NASA, to then be brought back within the organization that would prohibit her from assuming an anchor point of Black Woman Civil Activist. The formative contexts of Civil Rights/Cold War era highlighted the macro social values of '*peace and war*' and of being a pioneer. The '*war*' with respect to EEO, within the context of NASA in the early 1970's, was not close to being finished.

With respect to our goal of putting intersectionality to work, we focus on one particular contribution of this study. In spite of the enormous amount of data before us, we were able to reconstruct a complex individual via her range of ephemeral, discursive anchor points. We demonstrated that the complex marginalized reality of one individual within an organization, in a particular era, can be recreated and studied empirically within the notion of intersectionality. We have found that many intersectionality studies revert to simple listings of different identities without necessarily addressing the meanings associated with intersectionality. The interaction and interdependence of complex identities, influenced by meso and macro social contexts in our case, represented by a reworked anchor point concept, and the resultant marginalized order, are the key issues of intersectionality that we treated empirically.

The remaining intersectionality key issue of social justice remains to be addressed. Some initial reviews of this paper pointed out that a study focused on the Civil Rights/Cold War era was limited given that this was a different time, with different values and discourses. Some reviewers went so far as to state that we could not interpret what happened in the early 1970's given our twenty-first century perspective. The first author's experiences, in both presenting Ruth Bates Harris to conference audiences and in her own lived reality within the space industry of today, talk to a need to bring Bates Harris' plausible story forward into the twenty-first century. There continues to be damaging/marginalizing discourses in the space industry to this day, in spite of legislative work that is supposed to address discrimination and inequalities in the work force. By looking to the past and to the more blatant discourses, social values and power-relations of inequalities, the hidden discourses of the present can be examined to disrupt the status quo that continues to marginalize individuals working in the space industry.

Conclusion

We seized the opportunity to return to an organizational past to highlight that intersectionality and its application, within an organizational setting is possible, contributing to our understanding of how to put intersectionality to work. We

demonstrated one possible avenue of how to apply intersectionality, by using a reworked anchor point concept, and by considering an organizational context based on rules, meta-rules, and social values. We were able to analyze, via the CSM framework, a plausible story based on extensive archival data to extract Ruth Bates Harris' range of anchor points, and to study the influence of rules and meta-rules, and the formative contexts of the time on her identities. The promise of intersectionality as an empirical heuristic can be measured by the quality of the recreation of a complex individual, via her intersecting identities that embraced not only her social-identity categories but her job titles and occupational roles. This promise can also be measured by the quality of the representation of a specific context by uncovering NASA's rules, meta-rules and formative contexts, and their role in marginalizing this complex individual.

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Intersectionality and professional work in the life sciences: Constructing identities on the basis of affirmation, dis-identification, and professional distancing

Alexander Styhre

abstract

Intersectionality theory has primarily informed studies of how socially subordinate groups are bundled together into larger and more imprecise categories and how they consequently suffer from inadequate organizational practices. The general proposition of intersectionality theory, which holds that social identities and subjectivities are composed of heterogeneous and at times even contradictory and/or colliding elements, leading to fragmented yet coherent, or at least functional, subject-positions, is applicable to a broader set of actors and organizational settings, including professionals and elites. A study of life science researchers at small-sized life science companies demonstrates that this group operates in a domain that includes a variety of norms, beliefs, and practices, deriving from adjacent institutional domains and organizations, and that the members of this group craft images of themselves on the basis of combinations of recognition and dis-identification and of distancing themselves from, for example, academic research institutions, the so-called big pharma, and innovation system agencies. An intersectionality theory view thus invites a more detailed understanding of how professional identities and their ethos are constructed on the basis of heterogeneous resources and existing institutional and organizational arrangements, in turn having implications for, for instance, life science innovation.

Introduction

Unlike many other theories addressing the inherent instability of late-modern subjectivity, rooted in either the psychoanalytical literature and then, most

importantly, the works of Jacques Lacan, or derived from a post-structuralist analysis of the subject, first articulated by Nietzsche in the late Nineteenth century and championed by theorists such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Luce Irigaray, and Jacques Derrida, the concept of intersectionality is rooted in legal theory and law enforcement on basis of court ruling. The American legal theorist Kimberle Williams Crenshaw (1994: 3) coined the term 'intersectionality' in the 1980s to enable the more elaborate analysis of how, for example, race and gender constitute 'multiple grounds' for individual identities. At the same time as Crenshaw was calling for this multidimensional analysis of identity work, she was also warning against turning the concept of intersectionality into 'some totalizing theory of identity'. Instead, intersectionality is advanced as an analytical concept that invites a more detailed examination of how parallel or interfering identities are combined, negotiated, and reconciled within an individual's, or a group of individuals', identity work, their active construction of themselves as ethical and accountable subjects within a social context and a social world (Collins, 2015). Crenshaw (1994) explicitly recognized the socially subordinate or vulnerable positions of, for example, minorities or women in the court system; consequently, much of the intersectionality literature has emphasized how such groups actually embody and represent substantial heterogeneity.

While this one-sided focus on socially vulnerable and even subaltern groups has benefitted, for instance, organization studies, inasmuch as a series of managerial problems and malpractices regarding, for example, sexual harassment (Hearn and Parkin, 2001), discriminatory recruitment procedures (Rivera, 2012; Philips, 2005: Ridgeway, 1997; Martin, 1994), gender- and ethnicity-biased economic compensation (Castilla, 2015), inequality in economic compensation (Bell and Van Reenen, 2013; Osberg and Smeeding, 2006; Alderson and Nielsen, 2002), and so forth, the role of professionals and elites has only been subject to cursory intersectionality analysis (for an exception, see Kelan, 2014). A critical literature emphasizes some of the difficulties involved in the analytical use of the intersectionality concept (Marfelt, 2016; Nash, 2008), including the lack of a robust methodology and the strong emphasis on examining the identities of 'oppressed groups', among which black women are widely understood to be a particularly vulnerable social group (Nash, 2008). Furthermore, Marfelt (2016: 32) emphasizes the tendency to overstate 'oppression' as a justification for intersectionality studies, something that is in turn rooted in normative political programs aimed at promoting social and economic equality. To further reinforce intersectionality studies as a legitimate theoretical framework, Marfelt (2016: 32) advocates an empirically-grounded methodology that 'does not give primacy to oppression'. Following this more critical view of intersectionality studies, it may be the case, *arguendo*, that use of the term intersectionality implies a focus on socially-subordinate groups and their difficulties when it comes to acquiring

socially-desirable positions and other benefits (Burman, 2004). On the other hand, the actual term intersectionality, when understood outside of the legal system and legal theory, and denoting that all human identities and subject-positions are of necessity composed of diverse elements, invites a broader range of intersectionality studies.

On the basis of this proposition, i.e. that the concept of intersectionality lends itself to a wider set of research interests than merely examining socially vulnerable groups and advocating reform on the basis of such empirical data (Marfelt, 2016; Nash, 2008), this paper will examine how a particular professional group can be understood on the basis of this conceptual framework. Studies of professionals, or even elite professionals (e.g., medical doctors, scientists, financial traders, executives, judges, lawyers, and barristers, etc.; see Rivera and Tilcsik, 2016; Rivera, 2012), is a major field of research in the social science literature (Leicht and Fennell, 2001; Freidson, 2001; Brint, 1994; Larson, 1977); however, there is a shortage of studies of professionals on the basis of intersectionality theory. Therefore, this article will report on how scientists working in venture capital-backed startups in the life science industry operate in a domain lying at the intersection between major multinational life science companies (pharmaceutical companies and medical technology and device companies), academy, and state-governed innovation agencies. When inhabiting this domain lying 'in-between' various institutions, life science professionals construct identities that bridge and bond various elements of these institutions and their operative logic, thus becoming 'intersectional subjects' who endorse and reject different components of these 'ideal' institutional logics. Being 'betwixt and between' (e.g., Garsten, 1999), these scientists are neither part of the institutional structure of academic university research nor protected by the financial strength and hierarchical benefits of the major 'science businesses' (Pisano, 2006), instead needing to find their own way when pursuing the development of a new drug, or a new medical technology or device. In order to support and provide these kinds of life science companies with an institutional structure, many national and regional governments have invested substantial resources in building innovation systems, including, for example, incubators, science parks, business counselling services, entrepreneurship education programs, and so forth (Keller and Block, 2013; Niosi, 2011; Cockburn and Stern, 2010). This innovation system is at times hosted and co-developed by universities; however, in other cases, it is constructed as an independent organization. Unfortunately, at least in the case of Sweden, and as the empirical data will demonstrate, scientists at small-sized life science firms do not identify with this innovation system as they regard it to be overtly bureaucratic, as well as incapable of understanding the life science innovation and commercialization process and riddled with inconsistencies deriving from its

politically-motivated objective of creating jobs rather than economic value. Drawing on intersectionality theory, the study shows that scientists employed by small-sized science life firms believe that they inhabit a zone wherein their issues and concerns are not sufficiently understood, nor practically handled. Besides contributing to the literature on intersectionality in organizations, the research findings also have important policy implications regarding how to support and finance life science venturing in the contemporary economy.

The remainder of this paper is structured accordingly: First, the concept of intersectionality and intersectionality theory are examined. Thereafter, the methodology of the study is accounted for. Third, the empirical material is presented, paying attention to how elite professionals enact diverse identities for themselves in the periphery of professional fields (see, for example, the *ephemera* special issue on 'Professions at the margins'). Finally, some practical and theoretical implications are addressed.

Intersectionality and the analysis of professional work

Social theory strongly emphasizes how modernity has imposed the burden of self-reflexivity upon the late-modern subject. No longer living in a society characterized by stable and widely agreed upon norms, beliefs, and sources of reliable know-how and expertise, the late-modern subject is constantly expected to execute sophisticated forms of self-reflexivity (Giddens, 1990), to critically engage in the self-assessment of individual preferences, beliefs, and accomplishments. At the same time, in a highly-differentiated society dependent on specialization and the division of labor, the individual is simultaneously entangled and co-produced with existing and meaningful social relations, thus making the late modern subject a paradoxical figure who must constantly be relating him- or herself to the exteriority while individual responses to such external stimuli and impulses should be understood, simultaneously, on the basis of self-reflexive practices and self-discipline (Ridgeway et al., 2009; Kondo, 1990). For George Simmel, the great theorist of the cosmopolitan, modern subject (e.g., Simmel, 1971), encountering a ceaseless flow of impressions and information, 'the modern individual' is 'sociologically determined' by the groups 'intersecting his person by virtue of his affiliation with them' (Simmel, cited in Coser, 1974: 2). This idea of the subject as socially constituted dominates social theory and renders the late-modern subject as something that is always constituted already at the intersection of various social relations.

However, this enactment of the self at the crossroads of social relations does not downplay the role of agency. As, for example, Granovetter (1985: 487) says, 'actors

do not behave or decide as atoms outside of social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy. Their attempts at purposive action are instead embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations' (e.g., Adib and Guerrier, 2003: Kondo, 1990). This generic sociological proposition, i.e. that agency is rooted in systems of social relations, has been subject to various theoretical elaborations and amendments. The concept of intersectionality, for instance, is related to an epistemological discussion regarding the nature of the subject *qua* an autonomous, cognitive entity, while simultaneously addressing relatively straightforward legal and practical (i.e., managerial) problems (Collins, 2015; Walby et al., 2012; McCall, 2005). In contrast to the conventional view, whereby gender, race, class, and sexual preferences are understood and examined as compartmentalized qualities or social identities, the concept of intersectionality explores how these categories 'mutually construct one another' (Collins, 1998: 63). That is, rather than examining the subject in terms of one-dimensional features, separated into distinct theoretical frameworks, and, by implication, legal theories and juridical practices, the subject is understood from the outset as a bundle of diverse and at times even contradictory qualities and preferences, co-aligned and coexisting within the subject's everyday life (Collins, 2015). As each such defining and socially – and legally – relevant category is seen as being 'fluid, historical, and situationally contingent' (Browne and Misra, 2003: 489), the concept of intersectionality invites theorists and researchers to take a multidimensional view of the subject. In advocating such a view, it is possible to address the actual or latent conflicts existing between different sources of identity (e.g., gender vs. class, race vs. sexual preferences, etc.). Ultimately, claims Braidotti (2006: 62), the concept of intersectionality is helpful because it is an attempt to '[e]ncompass the multiple grounds of identity in a discussion about power-relations', while simultaneously maintaining the '[p]ost-structuralist insight about the multi-layered structure of identity within each singular subject'. That is, proposes Braidotti (2006), intersectionality as a concept and a theory is practically helpful in the advocacy of social reforms and new legislative practices while still recognizing, even affirming, the underlying theoretical complexity of the late-modern subject.

Intersectionality theory as an analytical tool

Based on these benefits, and supported by Crenshaw's (1994) claim that intersectionality should not be used as a new 'totalitarian' theory of the subject, the work of life science professionals will be examined, located in the intersecting zones of the existing institutional framework developed over time to promote life science research, innovation, and, more recently, venturing. When expanding intersectionality theory and scholarship to include professional groups, it is

important to recognize how intersectionality theory examines any subject that spans extant category boundaries, and not only those defined by, for example, gender, race, and class theories, i.e. categories subject to discrimination legislation, law enforcement and otherwise regulated by social norms. First of all, the life science professionals examined below are by no means members of any subordinate or subaltern groups as they are all highly educated (in many cases holding PhDs in, for instance, medicine or biochemistry and related disciplines) and widely respected, generating political interest and administrative support and being able to benefit from a growing international labor market where their competence and skills are highly valued. To that extent, life science professionals do not belong to the core group primarily targeted by intersectionality scholars, instead being frequently pigeon-holed in other analytical categories. At the same time, since intersectionality theory is concerned with understanding how the transgressing of defined boundaries imposes additional burdens and various costs on individuals, the theoretical framework is supportive of the study of professional workers who move between, for example, academic research institutions and industry. In other words, to further substantiate intersectionality theory, new analytical categories, such as academy-based versus industry-based professional work, can be included in the theoretical framework. As a consequence, intersectionality theory can contribute a meaningful analytical model that sheds light on how categories tend to discipline individuals into conceiving of themselves in mutually excluding and singular terms rather than under multiple categories.

Much intersectionality theory, and its practical use in empirical studies, has emphasized that analytical categories such as social class, ethnicity, or race are entangled with identity-construction. In many cases, such categories are used during analysis to emphasize how these categories are associated with subordinate social positions. For instance, in the case of social class, an individual from a working class background may feel uncomfortable with or excluded from, or may even be angered by, the intricate ceremonies and rituals of, for example, British elite tertiary education institutions (Dacin et al., 2010), leading to the concern that the individual may simply not 'fit in' at the intersection of elite education and working class identity. In contrast, in the present study, the term intersectionality is used to denote how a professional group of life science workers create identities on the basis of their experience of being in-between the existing institutional structures of, for example, the firm and the university system. As opposed to groups that are in a subordinate position as regards social class, ethnicity, or race, the life science professionals do not believe, by and large, that they are socially disfavored or excluded from certain communities or positions; yet, their identities are bound up with their location at the intersection between the cut and thrust of business and the scholarly inquiry of the academy, while not fully identifying with either field but cobbling together identities on the basis of association with the two

fields. In constructing such hybrid identities, life science professionals encounter a series of concerns which they need to practically deal with and which thus inform and structure their identity work. For instance, life science professionals employed at small-sized, venture capital-backed companies suffer from an endemic shortage of venture capital, the lack of qualified institutional support by the innovation systems that have been developed to cater for such ventures, and which share few of the qualities of, for example, the major pharmaceutical companies with which they are frequently compared. Taken together, these factors and conditions leave this group of life science researchers with a sense of it largely being down to them, and to their colleagues' own capacities, to handle emerging problems and challenges, at best encouraged by politicians and policymakers from a distance, but unfortunately also lacking both expertise and an understanding of what actions to take to support life science venturing.

Intersectionality theory thus offers analytical advantages that either competing or complementary concepts (e.g., institutional logic theory, identity theory, theories of power, communication theories) do not offer inasmuch as it connects identity work on the level of the individual, the professional group, or the community with the wider institutional and economic context, albeit without bestowing a final, homogeneous and coherent identity on part of the subject. Furthermore, as opposed to, for example, intersectionality studies of subordinate or subaltern groups, suffering from exclusion from, for instance, the circulation of capital and political power, the use of intersectional theory in the study of elite communities (wherein life science professionals should be included) actively recognizes that such communities do access key resources to pursue defined ends but does not equate the access to such resources with identity work. Instead, identities are constructed to accomplish various objectives (e.g., in the current case, to secure scholarly prestige, to land the next research grant, to factually add to a joint body of research work, or to provide attractive investment opportunities for external parties); these identities are thus, at best, transient and fluxing, constantly being adjusted to bridge and bond what the individual considers to be significant conditions determining day-to-day work. Seen in this light, intersectionality theory is a dynamic and situated analytical model that lends itself to empirical investigation and testing.

On life science venturing

The life sciences are a transdisciplinary field of research which includes advanced expertise in microbiology, biochemistry, experimental medicine, pharmacology, and material sciences and which spans public and private sector organizations, including research universities, major pharmaceutical and medical technology conglomerates, small startups, and university spin-outs. The life sciences provide

the basic research findings for health innovations; since the 1960s, investment in R&D in the life sciences has expanded greatly. Today, the life sciences account for more than 60 percent of all academic R&D expenditure (Cockburn and Stern, 2010). The health care industry, i.e. the primary beneficiary of life science research and health innovations, accounts for 13 percent of the United States' $10 trillion annual budget (Clarke et al., 2010a). In the general tendency to capitalize on basic research work, the university system has actively been encouraging forms of academic capitalism and academic entrepreneurship and enterprise (Berman, 2012; Haeussler and Colyvas, 2011; Colyvas and Powell, 2007; Stuart and Ding, 2006); an extensive body of research demonstrates that basic research and commercialization processes jointly constitute an intricate network of relations, collaborations, and exchanges that serve to produce, for example, new therapies and medical technology (e.g., Powell et al., 2005). In this network of relations and exchanges, the small-sized life science venture plays a key role as a vehicle for commercializing promising research findings. One of the principal challenges facing these types of professional firms is securing venture capital funding for their R&D work, the costly clinical trials in particular (Hochberg et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2006), and recruiting qualified commercial human resources, including executives and directors (Garg, 2013). However, as venture capital investment is a most complicated activity, especially in the unpredictable life sciences where it is complicated to predict the outcomes of clinical trials using, for instance, in vivo animal models, there tends to be an endemic shortage of venture capital for this category of firm (Rider and Swaminathan, 2012). As a consequence, many life science firms are working in the shadow of a finance capital drought, tinkering with a combination of research grants, government agency funding, and the occasional inflow of professional venture capital investments. It is within this institutional framework that the small-sized life science firms and their employees need to be understood in terms of being, on the one hand, venerated contributors of health innovations but, on the other, actors having a hard time identifying finance capital owners and convincing these to commit their funds to development and commercialization work.

Operationalizing intersectionality within life science venturing

In order to operationalize the wide-ranging and thus relatively imprecise concept of intersectionality, and to make it a useful analytical term when examining, for example, life science professionals, it is postulated that professional identities (here a proxy for and a precursor of actual operative practices and day-to-day work routines) are understood in terms of being constituted within the institutional framework where the agent works and pursues a professional career. That is, institutions, as well as the institutional logic they recursively represent and operate upon, create the opportunities for professionals to develop and maintain identities

that bridge and bond different institutional logics. In addition, such 'intersectional identities' are based on processes of identification and 'dis-identification' (Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001) whereby the actor (i.e., the life science professional) both endorses and rejects elements of the available institutional logics in order to create a meaningful and serviceable professional identity. The empirical material reported on below reveals that life science professionals working at small-sized, venture capital-backed firms engaged in a process of identification with certain values, norms, and beliefs existing in the different life science organizations, and in a process of dis-identification, defining themselves primarily in negative terms, i.e. what they were emphatically *not*. The professional identities of the life science professionals were thus simultaneously based on both positively identifying with certain values and norms (i.e., the norm of contributing to 'the common good' in academic research communities, and being committed to turning research findings into profitable ventures and products within industry) and negatively rejecting other values and norms (i.e., the bureaucratic and formalist understanding of life science venturing within the innovation system agencies, the highly individualized career-making of the academy).

'Negative identification' is not uncommon in professional work. Clegg et al.'s (2007) study of business coaches shows that this new professional category defined itself as something entirely different to the management consultant; Cohen et al. (2005) discuss at length how architects regard themselves to be creatives with refined aesthetic sensibilities and know-how, even though they actually handle a substantial amount of routine work. Similarly, studies of, for example, residents-in-training show that so-called 'scut work' – paperwork and other types of menial tasks which the residents deemed to be below their skill – levels and thus in violation of their identity-work – served as a source of dis-identification (Pratt et al., 2006: 245). A similar attitude was observed by Ho (2007) in the finance industry, where highly-qualified elite university students were hired to conduct so-called 'grunt work', (basically the finance industry term for health care scut work), i.e. repetitive and not very creative or analytically demanding duties, thus serving to distance this category of newly-hired employees from the notion that Wall Street is a glamorous and exciting employer. In addition, dis-identification was also an important practice for, for example, women and minorities, who were anxious not to be mistaken for administrative staff. Ho (2009: 118) reports having '[h]eard many stories of women who have avoided standing near coffee spouts for fear that men will mistake them for administrative assistants and ask them to help with the food and pour coffee'.

To better illustrate this dynamic between processes of identification and dis-identification, the research work of Vallas and Kleinman (2008) and Fochler (2016) can be referenced. Vallas and Kleinman (2008: 288) argue that an analyst

should recognize how 'multiple organizational logics coincide' and how this leads to 'hybridity and contradiction that generate ongoing tension, conflict and internal debate' in the day-to-day work of, for example, life science professional communities. For instance, the tension between academic research, and its emphasis on scientific authority and prestige, and the life science industry's emphasis on collaboration in order to generate, for example, patents, income, or venture capital investment, creates a sense of hybridity in the life science field. Vallas and Kleinman (2008: 288) speak about a 'two-way cultural traffic' between industry and academy, so that 'academic norms are adopted in firms in the service of corporate profits, and universities adopt corporate practices most frequently in the interest of improving the legitimacy they enjoy, whether in the public's mind or in the market for prestige within higher education'. That is, rather than being polarized into a 'pure' or 'ideal' academic institutional logic based on scientific contributions aimed at benefiting mankind, and a more 'real' or 'profit-oriented' industry institutional logic, these two cultures were mixed up and blended in step with academic institutions increasingly emphasizing revenues and industry stressing academic prestige and collaborative efforts. In other words, life science professionals inhabit an industry where institutional logics are increasingly interacting and becoming mixed up.

In the case of the Swedish life science professionals, not only academy and industry but also the state-controlled innovation system (including, for instance, regional incubators, university-based holding companies, and public venture capital investors) represented institutional logics that life science professionals partially recognize and partially reject in order to construct meaningful, yet to some extent fragmented, professional identities. In other words, operationalization of the intersectionality concept assumes that domain institutions (i.e., industry, academy, state-controlled innovation system agencies) inform and shape professional identities and professional work. For instance, what is referred to as 'second-order concepts' (Van Maanen, 1979) in the methodology section below, i.e. concepts that are not derived from the empirical material but serve instead to connect diverse empirical data with the available theoretical frameworks (e.g., intersectionality theory), embody these institutional conditions. Consequently, the empirical section of this paper is structured into three sections wherein the interviewees discuss and relate their own professional work to the three institutions of the academy (the first Section), the life science industry (at times addressed using the slightly derogatory term 'Big Pharma') (Section Two), and state-controlled innovation systems (Section Three). This analytical strategy, discussed in more detail below, is a viable approach to lowering intersectionality theory to the level of day-to-day activities and professional identity work.

Methodology

Design of the study

The empirical material presented in this article derives from a research project exploring new forms of organization in life science innovation. The study is based on a generic case study methodology (Gibbert et al., 2008; Gerring, 2004; Gillham, 2000; Stake, 1996) in which the case is the Swedish life science sector, in itself best depicted as an organizational field (e.g., Mazza and Pedersen, 2004; Leblebici et al., 1991) or as an institutional field (Purdy and Grey, 2009; Greenwood et al., 2002) that includes research universities, multinational life science companies, small-scale life science ventures, governmental and regional innovation systems, and venture capital investors. The study did not explicitly ask the interviewees about their identities and career choices, instead being aimed at mapping more broadly the changes and challenges facing the life science industry and venturing. Still, the interviewees explained their own interests, motivations, and careers in terms lending these passages of the interviews to intersectionality analyses.

Data collection and analysis

Interviewing was the principal data collection method used within the case study model (Kvale, 1996). This data collection method has been aligned with the theoretical question of difference (e.g., Dunbar et al., 2003) and used practically during previous intersectionality studies (see, for example, Kelan, 2014; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010). That is, the interviewees were asked why they had chosen to work at a small, startup life science company rather than pursuing an academic career or applying for a job at a major life science company generating its own cash-flow and becoming listed. Such questions were based on the implicit assumption that the interviewees had consciously rejected these potentially 'safer' careers to acquire certain benefits and experiences that these organizations were less capable of providing. In other words, the interview subjects were explicitly portrayed as part of a category of life science professionals who appreciate and value an enterprising culture and an 'entrepreneurial' way of life. The interviewees were also asked to list the pros and cons of conducting professional work at this type of organization.

The interview guide, which was designed *ex ante,* was semi-structured and enabled follow-up questions in order to further develop ideas and arguments. Despite the initial proposition regarding the preference on the part of the interviewees for an entrepreneurial way of life, the interviewing practices shared much with what Spradley (1979) refers to as an 'ethnographic interview', i.e. less concerned with affirming a predefined theoretical model but actively engaging with the life-world

of the interviewees, leaving much room for their own storytelling (see also Quattrone, 2006). The 'professional stranger' research model advocated by Agar (1996) encourages researchers to enter the field with an open mind, leaving significant space to apprehend what Becker (2009: 548) speaks of as 'unexpected observations made in the field'.

The study included more than 40 life science professionals, of whom the bulk were employed by small-sized life science companies and some of whom had actively developed new therapies, while others had served as experts and analysts within the life science field. All the interviews were conducted by one or two senior researchers and were tape-recorded (after the interviewees' consent had been obtained), and lasted for around one hour. The sample included an approximately equal amount of men and women spanning the ages late 20s to mid-60s. All the interviews were transcribed by a professional writing bureau and coded by one senior researcher, starting with categories derived from the interview data.

During the second round of coding, interview excerpts were co-located into joint empirical categories. During the third round of coding, 'second-order concepts' (Van Maanen, 1979), i.e., theoretical concepts derived from the research literature (as discussed in the section above and rooted in the notion that different life science institutions rest on different institutional logics and related practices), were used to structure the empirical data. These second-order concepts were finally used to emplot the empirical material into a narrative about the professional identities, attitudes, and beliefs pertaining to a career in the life sciences.

Life science researchers at the venture capital-backed firm

The interviewees largely testified to their commitment to the career choices they had made and pursued, articulating few regrets over not staying in the academy or embarking on a career at some large-scale corporation. In addition, some of the interviewees also argued that what they were trying to accomplish was not easily understood by outsiders. In fact, at times, the researchers themselves did not always understand exactly where to move next and how to map the entire process they were conducting. Therefore, life science innovation work remains highly opaque to outsiders and is thus also complicated to support – politically and financially. Said one interviewee: 'There are many [politicians or sponsors] who speak a bit [about the industry] and raise a few concepts that sound convincing, but it's complicated to fully understand what the life science industry is and what it needs unless you work in it. It's a fairly abstract field' (CEO, biochemistry analysis company). In fact, one of the researchers, who was developing a new drug, argued that new drug development was the 'ultimate intellectual challenge' and

that this kind of development could poetically be described as 'wandering around a dense forest', looking for a path into open fields (i.e., discovering the biochemical processes of the compound). While the innovation work is beset by these cognitive and communicative difficulties, life science innovation is a form of elite dependence on an unforgiving finance market whose actors shop around for new and promising investment objects. In this industry, there is little room for 'blue-sky research' or nostalgia over past scientific accomplishments, it is the results that matter: 'At some point, someone always says "show me the money!"' remarked one startup CEO. The life science innovation field is largely defined by its access to finance capital; as there is an endemic shortage of venture capital, the life span of the life science company is short: 'A unique characteristic of this business is that most companies die off very quickly, their projects just crumble', said one private venture hub coordinator.

In this life science innovation field, there are at least three major institutional structures that influence and define both the activities and the organizations' relations of importance to life science researchers. These are the academy and the university system, the existing life science industry, and the pharmaceutical and medical technology and device industry in particular, and the so-called innovation systems, which are all in their own specific ways different from the small-sized life science companies at which the interviewees worked. These three institutional structures will be discussed in what follows.

The academy and university-based life science research

While the researchers had strong academic credentials, many of them having spent some of their careers within the university system, there was also widespread skepticism regarding both the academy and what was regarded as a cloistered and inward-looking culture primarily emphasizing the publishing of academic journal papers over practical contributions and other benefits. Many of the interviewees asserted that they held academic research and scientific methods in esteem, but they also deplored the parochial culture of many life science departments at their university. One regulatory affairs manager at one of the companies said that firms needed to distance themselves from the academy in order not to discourage presumptive investors and partner companies, who were naturally skeptical about being lured in to fund basic research that had limited commercial potential:

> There can't be too much 'science' in [the firm's projects]. Then we'll have too much of an academic connection and that's what we're always trying to get away from. In some sectors of the pharmaceutical industry, that has positive connotations, but in [our field of research] and so on, there have been an astonishing number of academic ideas that have led nowhere. So, with strong academic connections, you will not be taken seriously by the [partner] companies. (Regulatory Affairs Manager, Life Science Company 4)

More specifically, the lack of know-how and understanding within the academy as regards the difference between basic research and the commercialization of research findings was a source of irritation among the interviewees. One of the researchers was tired of the argument that 'good science transforms itself into products'; in her view, an overtly naive and ignorant attitude that academic researchers aired from time to time:

> There's a naive attitude within the academy suggesting that if you only have the know-how, there will always be someone that can create a product. This idea simplistically suggests that if just the idea exists, then roughly 90 percent of everything will have been solved. (Scientist and Regulatory Affairs Officer, Life Science Company 1)

This lack of understanding was at times also accompanied by a condescending attitude vis-à-vis commercial interests and practices. The researcher exemplified this by referring to a conversation she had had with one of her professors after filing a patent while still working at a university department:

> When I filed this patent... I had this appraisal interview with my professor, and I said 'I have this patent and it feels great, and now' and blah, blah, blah. And then I said, 'I believe this is a merit!' And he replied, 'Well, I suppose all of us have a few good ideas every now and then.' Such was the level of the conversation. (Scientist and Regulatory Affairs Officer, Life Science Company 1)

Another interviewee, the CEO of a life science company, cited the bureaucratic and risk-averse culture of the academy as an impediment to fruitful collaborations. Working at a private company, running a laboratory in collaboration with a major research university, there was suddenly a concern that the public-private collaboration model violated some of the legal statutes of the university, leading to a stalemate whereby the university was unable to handle the situation, in turn leading to much additional work and accompanying frustration. In the eyes of this CEO, the lack of interest in industry and the commercial aspects of life science work was blocking a meaningful solution to the perceive problem:

> On the grassroots level, everyone agrees this model works, but it's the decision-makers who do not have the nerve to make a stand... What they indicate is that companies mustn't collaborate with the university because, in the university system, there's no knowledge at all about how to handle these issues. (CEO, Life Science Company 2)

While this CEO understood the concern regarding the risk of corruption when taxes were to some extent funding a private firm, he still argued that the university directors had failed to see the wider picture, again testifying to the inward-looking focus of the university directors and their lack of an enterprising ethos.

Taken together, the university system was one of the principal sources of life science research, but academic researchers had demonstrated little interest in, or understanding of, the work conducted by small life science companies. As a consequence, the interviewees distanced themselves from the universities and their career-planning, which centers on journal publishing and similar academic credentials rather than on commercial interests.

The pharmaceutical and medical technology and device industries

In contrast to the academy, which is largely financed by either government funding or endowments, the life science industry operates on the same health innovation markets as small-scale life science companies. After decades, or even centuries, of operations, pharmaceutical companies have acquired a strong market position, holding numerous patents and other IPRs that enable these companies to generate their own cash-flow to finance ongoing and future R&D activities. While most major pharmaceutical companies are today listed and thus responsive to investors' and shareholders' performance expectations, representatives of small-scale life science firms regard these multinational and divisionalized corporations as entirely different types of organizations to their own. For instance, one of the management consultants, an expert in regulatory affairs and experienced in recruiting directors from large corporations to sit on the boards of small firms, pointed to the significant differences in attitude between the two categories of life science companies:

> In many cases, [incubators] hire their boards from these companies, including some hot-shots from some of the major Swedish pharmaceutical companies, or who have been CEOs someplace. But these people have rarely worked hands-on at this kind of [small-scale, startup] company... They're used to having all these service staff who take care of everything, so [these directors] can't help these companies. They can perhaps ensure that there is financing on the basis of their previous contacts [in the industry]. But it doesn't help to have money unless you're doing all the right things, if you're taking a long-term view. (Life Science Consultant, Life Science Company 3)

Generations of managers, trained and socialized to think like Big Pharma representatives, were poorly equipped to advise small life science companies how to manage their very limited economic resources. Worse still, in many cases, it was people with most of their careers behind them who were being asked and were agreeing to sit on the boards of startups, in many cases further complicating the development of these firms as these directors were ill-adjusted to 'small budgets' and not fully informed about the most recent changes to the regulatory frameworks: 'Sometimes, they hired someone who knew the regulatory framework quite well 20 years ago, but that is constantly changing. So what they need for these early-stage companies is an entirely different board of directors,

directors who are more *au fait* with the field' (Life Science Consultant, Life Science Company 3).

The small-sized life science company representatives were also aware of the faltering innovative capacity of Big Pharma, leading to increased levels of concern, or even anxiety, within the industry regarding the next generation of blockbuster drugs that would finance future R&D work. Explanations for this declining level of innovativeness were to be found in more complex therapeutic needs, e.g., neurodegenerative diseases and cancer, more complex regulatory frameworks, the sheer size and the bureaucratic decision-making procedures of large-scale corporations, but also in the short-sightedness of the quarter economy and its orientation toward the liquidity preferences of shareholders. One of the interviewees referred to Big Pharma companies as 'colossi', arguing that they were managed entirely differently than small-sized companies. Taken together, few of the interviewees coveted employment in these corporations, while many of the researchers had previously gained work experience at such firms or had even actively applied for jobs outside of these companies. The interviewees identified with these companies in terms of their ambition to actually produce commercial products responding to market needs, but they also saw more similarities with other small-scale companies in, for example, the creative industries (e.g., video game companies, computer design companies, and the like).

The national and regional innovation system

Last but not least, and perhaps the most troublesome from an innovation policy perspective, the small-scale life science company representatives were quite skeptical regarding the role of the innovation system, i.e., the various incubators, science parks, business counselors, and so forth, all existing to actively support and fund life science ventures. A standing criticism, not entirely different from that leveled at the academic research community, was that the innovation system agencies were governed by their political goals and largely incapable of adding value to the existing life science companies. One of the CEOs, with substantial experience of the industry, both in the academy and in the pharmaceutical industry, exemplifies this criticism thus:

> The innovation system costs a certain amount of money, and I suggest that roughly half of that money is spent on keeping the system rolling, in order to support itself. So, it's a nice way of keeping lots of people employed. Sure, they can make some contributions, but they're not doing very much good for those they're supposed to be supporting. (CEO, Life Science Company 2)

This consumption of, primarily, tax revenues was particularly problematic as the endemic shortage of capital was ignored or downplayed by the agencies; instead,

there was a tendency to provide all kinds of counseling services that were relatively unnecessary. The CEO argued:

> The companies need money. They don't need advice – money is what they need. Well, some business counseling and so on is needed, to a certain extent. But when it comes to these coaches and consultants and business counselors, it's all grossly overrated. Give a company more money, that's what they need... Unfortunately, a considerable share of the money is fed into the innovation systems so they can function. (CEO, Company LSI 2)

Some interviewees even argued that the business counseling was deceptive as it encouraged life science companies to emphasize the wrong activities and outcomes (e.g., formal business plans). One regulatory affairs officer, also highly experienced in life science venturing, stressed this point thus:

> When I examine the innovation system, that we've been involved in for quite some time, 10 years or so, I'm quite critical about it... There are so many who want to 'help us', but they have no idea whatsoever about *how* to help us, and when they try, they have this condescending attitude and they say 'Now, let's do this!' rather than asking us what we need. (Scientist and Regulatory Affairs Officer, biopharmaceutical company)

This inability to recognize the actual and more pressing needs of small-sized life science companies ultimately derives from most agency counselors and advisors *de facto* only having very limited experience of the commercialization of basic research findings. At best, they knew how to encourage academic researchers – in themselves highly reluctant to embark on uncertain 'academic entrepreneurship' careers as they had much to lose should they fail to acquire further research grants – to build an early-stage startup venture based on their more promising research ideas; however, beyond that goal (strongly emphasized as a legitimate performance metric for innovation system agencies, based on a belief in the virtue of 'large numbers' trickling down to become, ultimately, a handful of commercially successful companies), the agencies were ineffective in fulfilling their role within the innovation system:

> Very few people within the innovation system actually do have any experience of producing [commercial] innovations... Quite often, they have this business school education, and they propose some or other model: 'This is how it works and this is how we're doing it!' etc. So they examine the model rather than the actual world. [Regarding financing] there is some money here and some money there, but you need to meet various criteria. And it takes a horrifying length of time to apply for this funding. (Scientist and Regulatory Affairs Officer, biopharmaceutical company)

One of the standing themes, when addressing the national innovation system, was interviewees making negative remarks about what is known as the 'teacher's exemption right' in national innovation policy. Unlike most other countries, where

the university employing an academic researcher is granted the ownership rights to research findings, the Swedish system instead gives the researcher him- or herself the ownership rights. This model was originally designed to encourage and promote entrepreneurial thinking and activities; however, many commentators regard the outcome of this model as being quite the opposite – i.e. the systemically-induced inability to fruitfully handle promising research findings. This policy failure also attracted relatively little political attention and thus there was a tendency among the interviewees to address political bodies and policymakers in relatively unenthusiastic terms. In short, the innovation system was more of a liability than a resource for small-sized life science ventures.

By and large, interviews with professionals working at small-sized life science firms, in many cases financed by venture capital and with a very insecure financing situation, reveal that this group of professionals is neither protected by the institutional framework of the university, where the failure to acquire research grants can be cushioned by, for example, increased teaching loads or administrative work, nor couched within the market-based framework of major life science companies capable of securing their own funds on the basis of market sales of an existing portfolio of products. Finally, the innovation system – partially co-developed with the university system via its ambition to promote 'academic capitalism' (Münch, 2014; Slaughter and Leslie, 1997) – was also alien to these professionals' day-to-day work experience. At the same time, these small-sized firms and their co-workers shared with these other organizations their passionate interest in life science research, their respect for scientific methods, their interest in commercializing research findings, and so forth. That is, the life science professionals of small-sized firms inhabited a heterogeneous space, a domain betwixt and between these other organizations and institutions; they formed part of all of them but did not fully belong anywhere. Expressed differently, the identities and the self-reflexive agency of the life science professionals could best be understood on the basis of intersectionality theory.

Discussion

As indicated by the empirical material, life science professionals at small-sized firms dissociated themselves from certain elements, emphasized by and within other institutions, organizations, and actors; yet, these life science professionals were intimately related to and dependent on these institutions and their norms, values, practices, and resources. These professionals thus created for themselves what Anteby (2013: 1278) speaks of as a 'professional distance', i.e. the separation between an actor and his or her 'field' on the basis of dis-identification (see also Frandsen, 2012; Fleming and Spicer, 2003). At the same time, this professional

distance from other professional domains emerged at the intersection of a variety of competing and complementary professional practices and identities, all sources of identification. Taking an intersectionality theory view, the life science professionals operated in a domain where their work, and thus also their professional identities, was crisscrossed by alternative professional practices, norms, objectives, and career choices, causing them, on the one hand, to be separated from both other institutions and their professional work, while on the other, causing their identities to be entangled with, and co-produced in relation to, these sources of professionalism. As suggested by Vallas and Kleinman (2008: 288), a 'two-way cultural traffic' between industry and academy (and hybrid forms thereof) creates a sense of hybridity and a feeling of being located in a meshwork where industry mimics academic institutions while academy increasingly endorses industry standards when assessing, for instance, the value of scholarly findings and contributions. As opposed to, for example, identity theory and the professionalism literature, intersectionality theory emphasizes the power underlying the widely-recognized and in many cases taken-for-granted categories used in everyday life organization and management. In this view, categories are historical and situationally contingent (Browne and Misra, 2003), serving to mutually construct one another, either through mutual exclusion (as in the case of gender) or by imposing typifications that include beliefs and assumptions regarding ethnicity or race (Collins, 1998). Identity theory and the professionalism literature are concerned with examining the use of more stable, and thus serviceable, categories in order to provide the individual with a functional image of the self, providing the ontological certainty needed to operate with integrity and autonomy within a specific field. Thus, what Braidotti (2006: 62) refers to as the 'multi-layered structure' of identity within each singular subject is overlooked, or only assumes, at least, a more peripheral role during analysis since such hybridity may undermine a coherent and supportive professional identity. The life scientist's day-to-day work may appear to be uneventful and micromanaged by various standard operating procedures, from afar, but the current university governance regime and the life science industry are, in fact, under pressure to simultaneously accommodate scientifically-relevant research work and the delivery of financially-attractive investment options. That is, life science researchers are constantly refashioning an image of themselves in terms of being both academically-relevant and industry-oriented, thus oscillating between these positions to varying degrees. This in turn gives life science research scant protection from market interests and influences, interests and influences which generate a work situation characterized by precisely the multi-layered structure deriving from the power-relations that intersectionality theory not only recognizes but also makes its foremost analytical object. In other words, intersectionality theory also provides a meaningful

analytical framework for non-subaltern groups, something which also further substantiates the importance of taking an intersectionality perspective.

This research finding has implications for intersectionality theory. As, for example, Braidotti (2006) has pointed out, the actor's identity is not primarily rooted in stable and timeless essences, and/or extra-social conditions, but identities are always, of necessity, in a state of flux and change, undergoing continuous modification and adaptation and unfolding more as a *route* than being rooted (to use Clifford's, 1997, apt metaphor). Intersectionality theory thus invites the student of, for example, organizations and professional communities to actively examine how sources of professionalism and their accompanying identities and institutional logics are, of necessity, constructed in fields that are crisscrossed by diverse, heterogeneous, and, at times, even competing practices, resources, norms, and beliefs, representing a form of polymorphous 'cultural traffic', thus making the professional worker (or any other employee or actor) constantly adapt to and reconcile these heterogeneous resources. More importantly, intersectionality theory provides an interest theory of power for examining these processes, emphasizing how all these social, cultural, and economic resources, constitutive of shared categories, are established on the basis of the interests and preferences of certain groups. Intersectionality theory scholars thus not only examine the processes of creating meaningful and functional categories in society, as well as how, for example, identities are derived from such shared categories, they also conceptualize these categories *per se* as manifestations of underlying interests. In the case of the life science professionals working at small-sized life science companies, and reported on in this article, the active creation of professional identities, partially negatively in terms of what these professionals *were not*, ultimately provided these actors with the clout and confidence they needed to act within their domains of expertise and within the inherited and created institutional framework. At the same time, these choices of considering themselves in various terms were embedded into the wider socio-economic conditions in which these life scientists were operating, and on the basis of the resources mobilized to accomplish the stipulated tasks.

Based on the empirical material reported on, this article contributes to the discourse on intersectionality in two ways: Firstly, it emphasizes that intersectionality is a term applying not only to socially-vulnerable and/or economically-exploited social groups, subordinate to systemic social and organizational inequalities, instead proposing that intersectionality analyses also apply to 'elite professionals' such as scientists, executives, lawyers, etc., with each professional group embodying considerable heterogeneity inasmuch as it needs to accommodate complementary or even opposing interests. For instance, scientists need to work toward maximizing social welfare on the basis of their expertise while

paying close attention to financially interesting areas to invest in. Executives need to adhere to various forms of corporate social responsibility (which, critics contend, falls outside the expertise of executives and directors) while optimizing the overall efficiency of the resources they are deploying inside their corporations. This 'both/and' logic, conducive to the accommodation of opposing objectives, will present a challenge to professional groups if they need to bring together diverse norms, values, and skills within what is expected to be a unified and coherent professional role and identity.

Secondly, the article more specifically provides an empirical case indicating that innovation policies that emphasize professional identities (i.e., the fabrication of entrepreneurs) to the detriment of more ambitious projects aimed at securing venture capital funding for financing R&D activities can easily serve as sources of dis-identification among life science professionals working at small-sized life science companies. Taking an intersectionality theory view, dis-identification constitutes, arguably, a response from the individual facing an overbearing variety of objectives and identity-choice alternatives as regards reconciling these possibilities into an at least temporarily stable and coherent identity that renders day-to-day work meaningful. In practical terms, life science professionals are not so interested in being told what to do by innovation system agency officers who only possess – from the vantage point of the interlocutor – a limited understanding and experience of life science venturing and commercialization. Unfortunately, the interlocutors remark, the services being provided today by innovation system agencies, on an industrial basis, and in fact a cottage industry deriving from Swedish innovation policy, solve few of the practical problems encountered by life science professionals working at venture capital-backed firms. At best, such practices serve as sources of dis-identification among life science professionals, creating a professional distance from what they tend to regard as parochial innovation policies.

Conclusion

During the late-modern period, subject-positions are not so much inherited within stable and predictable socio-economic and cultural frameworks as they are actively fabricated within the lifeworld of the enterprising individual, thus creating productive images of the self that enable agency and meaningful and corrective self-reflexivity (Braidotti, 2006; Giddens, 1991; Kondo, 1990). Since such images of the self must accommodate a variety of social relations and roles, in themselves subject to continuous change and modification, the late-modern subject is constituted as a fragmented, yet reasonably coherent, entity that integrates and reconciles heterogeneous elements. Georg Simmel argued that the modern

individual was 'determined' by groups with whom that individual interacted, while Collins (1998: 63) claimed that analytical categories used to construct, for example, identities 'mutually construct one another'. Intersectionality theory recognizes this epistemological porosity of the self and seeks to unveil the heterogeneity within what common sense thinking stubbornly deems unified and fixed, and consequently unworthy of further examination (Walby et al., 2012; McCall, 2005). Such active engagement with the heterogeneity of organizational subjectivities has arguably benefitted the analysis of organizational and managerial practices and served to, for example, shed light on the issue of inequality within organizations (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010; Philips, 2005; Ridgeway, 1997).

At the same time (and for plausible and legitimate reasons, as well as in line with the legal theory traditions within which the concept of intersectionality was first advocated), such analysis has primarily focused on historically disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities, women, or the elderly. But just as there is a kind of 'downside intersectionality risk' (i.e., heterogeneous communities being excluded from favorable positions on the basis of such grounds), there may also be an 'upside intersectionality risk', whereby certain professional communities benefit from being able to operate in-between predefined institutional boundaries (i.e., the large-scale firm and the academy). The study of life science professionals, reported on in this article, broadens the scope of intersectionality studies and demonstrates that 'elite professionals', too, navigate within domains where they construct meaningful identities on the basis of the different institutional milieus where they operate or collaborate with (e.g., Kelan, 2014). For instance, the life science professionals working at life science ventures were skeptical about the perceived 'purity' of academic research work (including the regulatory affairs manager who argued that 'there can be too much "science" in development projects'), the innovation system agencies developed to support the ventures ('The companies need money; they don't need advice – money is what they need', as one CEO remarked), and the pharmaceutical industry more widely (captured by the claim that many directors recruited from major pharmaceutical companies have little experience of working under budgetary constraints). Life science professionals working at venture capital-backed companies thus create identities that help them to cope with the difficulties and inconsistencies they perceive in their domains of work.

Vallas and Kleinman (2008: 288) emphasized a 'two-way cultural traffic' between industry and the academy, regarding the startup firm as a site where some of the best elements of two worlds were combined, i.e., it offered possibilities of working jointly with skilled colleagues to develop life science innovations, but without, for example, the disruptive decisions of finance market-oriented managers, undermining the continuity of their research work. More explicitly, such a process

of identity-making includes positive affirmations of certain norms, practices, as well as dis-identification and the creation of professional distances; professionals need to know both *what they are* and *what they aim to become*, as well as what they *are not*, and what norms and beliefs they shun or dismiss as irrelevant to their line of work (Cech et al., 2011; Schleef, 2006; Pratt et al., 2006). In this view, professional identities in, for example, life science venturing are, of necessity, hybrid, i.e., they are a patchwork of elements from different institutional milieus, yet serviceable since such identities provide professionals with agency that is conducive to the capacity to act within their field of expertise. Taken together, the study confirms and underlines the relevance of intersectionality theory in organization studies inasmuch as it represents, in Marfelt's (2016: 32) formulation, 'one small step toward bringing intersectionality into new areas', by arguing that today life scientists are far from protected by the legitimacy of academic research institutions as they need to participate in the competitive games imposed by the regime of academic capitalism. That is, life scientists need to serve the ulterior motive of not only providing intriguing and yet-to-be corroborated research findings but also of providing the finance industry with attractive investment options.

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Re-radicalising intersectionality in organisation studies

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abstract

Although intersectionality emerged in the 1970s through the activism of Black feminists, its application to organisation studies in recent years has too often been deradicalised as a tool to collate and commodify differences. In this article, I propose that we need to re-radicalise intersectional theorising. I offer biography and history as two methodological tools with which we may fulfil intersectionality's social justice aims. Biography compels researchers to align ourselves with the struggles of marginalised subjects. History asks us to locate our subjects in their specific histories of social injustice. It is my hope that through critical, reflexive theorising, we may protect the radical roots of intersectionality and guard against its co-optation into prevailing systems of white imperial power.

Introduction

Despite its long tradition in the social sciences, intersectionality has only in more recent years begun to inform theoretical and methodological advances in organisation studies. Its application to organisational research spans across analyses of professional identities (Essers et al., 2010; Johansson and Śliwa, 2014; Kelan, 2014), career progression (Kamenou et al., 2013; Sang et al., 2013), leadership (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Richardson and Loubier, 2008), entrepreneurship (Knight, 2016; special issue of Ethnic and Racial Studies, Romero and Valdez, 2016), diversity management (Syed and Özbilgin, 2009; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al., 2010) and organisational inequality regimes (Acker, 2012; Healy et al., 2011; Holvino, 2010).

However, emerging critiques have illuminated some potential limitations and problems with which intersectionality is adopted in recent research. Organisation studies in particular have had a tendency to engage superficially with intersectionality; focusing on identities and categories of difference, but overlooking processes of differentiation and systems of domination (Dhamoon, 2011). Perhaps even more problematic is a rising tendency to use intersectionality to showcase multiple identities like gender, race and class without any commitment to the social justice aims of intersectionality's Black feminist roots.

I suggest in this article that future organisational research need to re-radicalise intersectionality to protect against its misappropriation. Demonstrating through examples from my own study of Chinese Australian leaders in government and business, I show how two methodological considerations – biography and history – can respectively help align researchers' standpoints with the politics of their marginalised subjects and contextualise subjects' struggles towards equality and justice. In doing so, I hope to generate a dialogue of how intersectionality may help organisation scholars to interrogate power relations in work and organisations as well as help their subjects transform them (Dhamoon, 2011).

The de-radicalisation of intersectionality

Intersectionality is an evolving concept and tool that broadly refers to a recognition of the 'complex, irreducible, varied and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation – economic, political cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts' (Brah and Phoenix, 2004: 76). As an analytical sensibility, intersectionality emerged in social activism from the 1960s (Chun et al., 2013; Collins, 2000; 2012). In the academy, the work of black feminists poignantly articulated that additive single-axis approaches were inadequate to understand and account for the experiences of African American women, where for example, their experiences are seen as the combination of static experiences of blackness and femaleness (Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984; The Combahee River Collective, 1977). Concerned centrally with African American women's emancipation, this early work shows that oppression cannot be reduced to one axis of gender or race, but is produced through multiple, intersecting axes (Collins, 2000; 2012).

The term 'intersectionality' itself was offered by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989; 1991) to demonstrate and challenge the limitations of the law in accounting for the intersection of racial and gender discrimination, and thus address the marginalisation of women of colour. Crenshaw's conceptualisation of intersectionality has been immensely influential, traversing disciplines from

sociology to political science, and adapting to the methodological practices of their field to diverse effects (Cho et al., 2013; Pathak and Rajan, 1992).

In recent years, intersectionality has offered a more nuanced lens to explore the effects of power relations in work and organisations more specifically (Acker, 2012; Essers et al., 2010; Healy et al., 2011; Holvino, 2010; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Johansson and Śliwa, 2014; Kamenou et al., 2013; Kelan, 2014; Knight, 2016; Richardson and Loubier, 2008; Zanoni et al., 2010). Intersectional organisational research has been attuned to how systemic power relations interweave with the ongoing construction of identities along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion and age (Holvino, 2010; Zanoni et al., 2010). In particular, this body of literature has vividly detailed the barriers to the labour force participation and career progression of non-white women, where ethnic and religious minority women are expected to suppress their deviance from the organisational 'norm' (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006). Further, identity axes can serve to render other inequalities unspeakable as Kelan (2014) found in a study of young professionals, where many associated gender inequality with the older generations and saw sexism as an individual, rather than systemic, issue.

While the application of intersectionality to organisation studies has produced valuable insights, its focus on identity has at times only enabled a cursory engagement with intersectionality. Dhamoon (2011) characterises intersectional research through four points of focus: identities of individuals or social groups (e.g., black women); categories of difference (e.g., gender and race); processes of differentiation (e.g., gendering and racialisation) and systems of domination (e.g., patriarchy and white supremacy). Although comprehensive analyses across multiple foci undoubtedly exist (e.g., Knight, 2016), for the most part, intersectional examinations in organisation studies focus on individual identities and categories of difference.

Intersectionality is often cited to explain a focus on multiple axes of identity like gender and race, or gender, race and class. It is not uncommon for organisational research to frame their contribution to intersectionality along the lines of 'gender and race have been well-explored, but this study looks at race and religion/gender and age/etc.'. This rationale inadvertently reduces intersectionality to a tool for collating and commodifying 'difference'. In reflecting on the interpretation and influence of her work over time, Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2013: 980) calls into question the ways in which her intersectional, transnational feminist theorising has been cited as a 'totemic symbol'; appropriated without fundamentally interrogating the ways in which the authors nonetheless reproduce white, imperialist power. In line with this, unreflexive organisational research may risk

further domesticating and deradicalising intersectionality (Cho et al., 2013; Mohanty, 2013; Nash, 2008).

Indeed, in a recent study of a university's initiatives to change a racist campus culture, Rodriguez and Freeman (2016) show how discourses of 'intersectionality' were employed to undermine efforts to challenge racism. By arguing for the need to consider race alongside other subjectivities like sexuality, gender and class, white members of this anti-racist initiative ironically re-centred whiteness and restored white privilege. These discursive tactics appropriated intersectionality as a tool with which white students and staff could use to delegitimise discussions of race and racism as narrow, exclusive, or even harmful to the university's efforts to foster inclusivity.

Rodriguez and Freeman's (2016) findings demonstrate the ease with which intersectionality is abstracted from its Black feminist roots and deradicalised in practice. This effect supports arguments from Black feminists such as Patricia Hill Collins (2004) and bell hooks (2003) who credit intersectionality's popularity to its politically neutral and less threatening character. For these scholars, intersectionality obscures more explicit challenges to the interlocking systems of imperialism, white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy in our cultures (Collins, 2004; hooks, 2003). Thus ongoing theorisations of intersectionality may need to be cautious with how the concept can be used to derail the very social justice aims with which it was developed to advance.

I suggest through this article that future organisational research could protect the radical roots of intersectionality and guard against its co-optation into prevailing systems of power via two dimensions of its methodological application: biography and history. Biography allows intersectional inquiry to reflect on the standpoint of the researcher relative to the standpoints of their subjects, and thus enable their interpretations and representations to reflect the voices of marginalised subjects (Denzin, 1997; 2009). History refers to the importance of contextualising intersectional identities within histories of oppression and struggle (Collins, 1986, 1999, 2000, 2004) and rejecting the tendency to abstract intersectionality in ways that ultimately maintains sexism, racism and other modes of domination.

I will outline how these two considerations may be integrated into organisational research; illustrating with examples from my recent study of Chinese Australian leaders. A brief background to the study will be presented before demonstrating how biography and history informed my use of intersectionality as a methodological framework.

Background to a study of Chinese Australian leaders

In 2014, I received seed funding from my faculty to conduct a research project examining how race and ethnicity informed the identities and experiences of Chinese Australian leaders. The project coincided with growing public interest and debate around the relatively low representation of people of Asian descent in positions of leadership in Australia. Due to this under-representation, I broadened my sample to include Chinese Australians working in both government and business, as well as middle managers who saw themselves engaging with or aspiring to leadership. I conducted interviews with 21 participants (14 men and seven women) between April and December 2014. Driven by my own experiences, intersectionality's political commitment to share voice with a marginalised group was central to my research design (Nash, 2008). I was explicit of a radical agenda from the outset, stating on the research information statement sent to all prospective interviewees that the study was 'grounded in my observation that we [...] remain stereotyped and overlooked within organisations and Australian society' and that 'I aspire to challenge this tendency by offering stories of Chinese Australian leaders that are self-defined, humanising and beautiful'.

Four participants were initially found through my own professional networks, with additional participants engaged through snowball sampling based on their attribution by the earlier participants as a leader and their self-identification as Chinese and Australian. This dual identification was claimed by those who saw themselves as descending from Chinese heritage (primarily or partly), and either born in or permanently migrated to Australia. It thus excluded temporary migrants (e.g., expatriates) of Chinese descent in Australia. Their response to my call also reflected a shared political commitment to racial equality, with many participants seeing my study as a platform in which they could express their concerns with dominant Australian perceptions and constructions of what it means to be 'Chinese'.

Interviews were conducted in local cafés and restaurants selected by the participants, with the exception of eight that were conducted in the participants' private offices. The interviews began with a life history approach – 'tell me about your background, your childhood, where you went to school and your memories growing up' – and then proceeded in an informal, unstructured way, allowing the informant to choose which aspects of their life and career they wished the interview to concentrate. Each interview lasted between an hour and three hours with a total of 29 hours and 45 minutes of formal recorded interviewing time.

Through the negotiated dialogue of our interviews, I elicited diverse narratives of identity and power. Although I chose participants' racial identities to stand centre

stage in the framing of my study, the multiple axes of an intersectional lived reality for my participants suffused their narratives. For example, a senior marketing manager at a financial services firm recognised how Asian people were differently gendered when she remarked how, regardless of the challenges she has faced as an Asian woman manager in her organisation, she believed Asian men experience greater difficulties in securing visibility and legitimacy as leaders. Her interpretation hints at the tensions produced by intersecting discourses of gender, race and sexuality that 'feminise' Asian masculinities as subordinate and deviant (Chan, 2001; Louie, 2002; Zhong, 2000).

I also adopted intersectionality as an analytical tool to interpret the interviews. This allowed me to draw links between Dhamoon's (2011) conceptualisation of the multiple levels of intersectionality theorising, where analysis can attend to the processes of differentiation by recognising that individual identity is produced and reproduced through discourse (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006; Thomas and Linstead, 2002). These processes of identity formation are necessarily grounded in power (Thomas and Linstead, 2002). Specifically, what it means to be a 'leader' and what it means to be 'Chinese' are influenced by wider sociopolitical meanings constructed through systems of domination, including imperialism, white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy.

The findings were analysed across the dynamic interrelations between identities, categories of difference, processes of differentiation and systems of domination (Dhamoon, 2011). The published analyses include how masculine sexualities were racialised among the participants who identified as men (Liu, 2017b). Specifically, the paper traces how Asian masculinities have been constructed as weak, effeminate and inferior in Western imaginations, and explores how the male participants practised sensuality in pursuit of decolonisation, agency and pleasure. Another paper explores how imperialism as a system of domination constrain Chinese Australian identities within Orientalist fantasies of the ancient and mysterious exotic, and the ways the participants both co-opted and resisted this image (Liu, 2017a).

When the analyses for manuscripts were written up, excerpts relating to each participant were sent to them for review, inviting their input and feedback on my interpretations. All participants responded to this request, and in three cases, their review of their original interview prompted them to initiate second and third interviews to elaborate on their perspectives and discuss how their experiences had changed over the course of the year. Their willingness to engage with the entire research process perhaps reflected the non-hierarchical nature of our relationship. Our ongoing discussions and debates eventually developed into collaborative narratives in the write-up of the findings.

The radical commitment of the study was realised through two methodological tools: biography and history. Biography refers to the alignment of the researcher's standpoint with that of the research subjects. History involves contextualising the analysis of subject experiences within their specific backgrounds of socio-political struggle. Both these tools inform the analysis of qualitative data, although biography will also help shape the research design, for example, the choice of research subjects and sampling methods. The next section will examine how each of these tools can be applied to intersectional research, illustrating with examples from my study of Chinese Australian leaders.

Re-radicalising intersectionality with biography and history

Biography

Anti-colonial critical scholarship has long established the importance for researchers to align their research ethics with the politics of their marginalised subjects (Bishop, 1998; Christians, 2011; Denzin, 2009; Fine, 1994). Theorising from this ethical stance seeks to subvert neocolonial modes of knowledge production in which the researcher is styled as an objective authoritative figure who has the right to categorise and contain exotic 'Others' (Chakrabarty, 1992; Jack and Westwood, 2009; Prasad, 2003; Westwood, 2001). They reject these epistemic norms by adopting collaborative and participatory forms of inquiry that makes the researcher first and foremost responsible to those being studied (Denzin, 2009). Their research thus challenges gender, racial, class, age or sexual stereotypes, while promoting critical consciousness and social transformation (*ibid*.).

One way in which researchers may align themselves with the struggles of marginalised subjects in intersectional theorising is by explicitly drawing on their personal experiences. Denzin (1997: 47) highlights the value of biographical approaches to interpretation that allow the researcher to 'work outwards from [their] biography, entangling his or her tales of the self with the stories told by others'. This can enable the researcher to find stories of shared struggle with his or her subjects, even if they might not share the same identity categorisations.

My research was closely tied to my biography. I grew up in Sydney, Australia as a '1.5 generation' Chinese immigrant. Although my family's residency was made possible due to Australia's state-sanctioned policy of multiculturalism that outwardly celebrates a commitment to ethno-cultural diversity (Ang, 2014; Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Hage, 1998), I quickly learnt that survival in Australian society required a certain assimilationist performance.

Within critical race theory, whiteness is recognised as more than a biological marker: it constitutes a performative identity located within specific sociohistorical contexts (Foster, 2003; Gillborn, 2005; Giroux, 1997). I performed whiteness in my context through adopting an anglicised first name, speaking with an Australian accent, and eventually undertaking a university degree in the white-dominated discipline of organisation studies that seemed furthest from the 'nerdy' Asian stereotypes of Accounting and Finance that I felt I was expected to pursue. This performance was rewarded with visibility and acceptance from my white professors and peers. Conversely, I witnessed how my classmates and colleagues at university marked as 'foreign' by virtue of their appearance, accents and other aspects of their embodiment, became invisible in the institution; and how easily I too fell into those cracks unless I vigorously exerted my white Australian performance to each new audience.

In my research, my experiences with Otherness prompted me to critically probe and question the ways participants' themselves reproduced stereotypical definitions of what it meant to be 'Chinese'. For example, some leaders internalised notions of their Asian passivity and avowed to overcome their lack of directness and assertiveness, even while demonstrating their directness and assertiveness in their interviews. Rather than accepting their stereotypical reports as given or somehow 'proof' that Asian people really are passive, my shared identification and experiences allowed me to understand how their identity work was shaped by wider processes of racialisation and white supremacist ideologies.

Where it seemed appropriate, I further offered these personal experiences to my participants during the extended informal discussions around our interviews. This interchange strengthened our sense of mutual trust and solidarity as it underscored for my participants how my study was driven by a personal commitment to racial equality (Clough, 1994; Denzin, 2009). Through ongoing dialogue and follow-up interviews, this biographical approach to intersectional research offered insights into how Chinese Australians grappled with conflicting senses of self and their attempts towards overcoming internalised racism (DuBois, 2005).

Research that fails to align with the politics of its subjects can exert epistemic violence against subdominant groups (Spivak, 2012). This violence is engrained in white people's historical authority to assert racialised knowledge about the 'Other' (*ibid.*). By working outwards from my biography, I sought to subvert traditional, distanced approaches to social research that can reproduce existing gender, racial and sexual stereotypes of one's subjects (Fine, 1994; Smith, 2005). Intersectional research interpreted by 'outsiders' can similarly be tempted to rest on stereotypes or take for granted dominant categorisations like 'black minority ethnics (BMEs)'

that homogenise diverse peoples. My standpoint as an 'insider' in the study, however, made it a personal imperative to challenge the stereotypes that abound of Chinese people in Australia, utilising research as a vehicle to humanise social meanings around what it means to be 'Chinese'.

History

The deradicalisation and detachment of intersectionality from its social justice roots as observed in organisation studies have been similarly observed across Black feminist theories. Patricia Hill Collins (1986, 1999, 2000, 2004), who advanced landmark theories such as interlocking oppressions and the matrix of domination that influenced intersectionality, has reflected on how her theories have been appropriated by mainstream sociological research over the last two decades. Her ideas were developed during the 1980s and 1990s with the explicit aim of challenging white supremacy in sociology by sharing voice with Black women and affirming their valuable standpoints on self, family and society. However, her theories have frequently been abstracted from their political purpose and used by academics to claim marginal positions for any individual (Collins, 1999).

Collins (1999) claims that theories cannot be divorced from the socio-political contexts of their production. Moreover, theorising needs to attune to the specific histories of social injustice among its subjects. While the histories of Chinese migrants in Australia differ from the centuries of slavery, colonialism and subjugation experienced by the Black women who inspired and contributed to intersectional theorising, interpretations of Chinese Australian experiences need to be grounded in their specific social histories.

Historicising intersectional analyses is one way to address Dhamoon's (2011) argument that intersectionality needs to consider the interrelations between identity, categories of difference, processes of differentiation and systems of domination. A historical approach goes beyond cursory treatments of identity that are primarily fixed on 'this is what Chinese Australians think', towards understanding how racialisation and white supremacist ideologies have operated in organisational and societal arenas to constrain their identities over time. History here therefore does not comprise the collection of archival data per se, but the understanding of ongoing, shifting socio-political dynamics that shape how we see our research subjects as well as how they see themselves.

The earliest Chinese migrants arrived to Australia in the mid-nineteenth century, primarily from the southern Pearl Delta region of China, during the gold rushes in New South Wales and Victoria (Choi, 1975). By the time of Australia's Federation in 1901, there were close to 30,000 people of Chinese descent in

Australia. However, that same year saw the passing of the Immigration Restriction Act (commonly known as the White Australia policy), which limited the arrival and endorsed the deportation of non-European immigrants (Curthoys, 2003). The White Australia policy was finally abolished in 1965, since which the ideas of a multicultural national identity have become increasingly widespread in a landscape of post-war immigration and globalisation (Jayasuriya et al., 2003).

In contrast to the *laissez-faire* approach of the U.S., Australia is distinct in its deliberate management of ethno-cultural diversity, evidenced by an amalgam of policies designed to facilitate and supervise diversity's benefit on the nation (Walsh, 2012). However, critics suggest that the outwardly celebratory commitment to ethno-cultural diversity is predicated on an established hierarchy between white Australians and ethnic Others (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001). Under state-sponsored multiculturalism, Australians are encouraged to 'express and share their individual cultural heritage', however, they are cautioned that they can only do so 'within carefully defined limits' while maintaining 'an overriding and unifying commitment to Australia' (Office of Multicultural Affairs, 1989: paras. 4-5). Whiteness thus remains at the apex of Australia's racial hierarchy, while the present neoliberal context increasingly encourages ethnic minorities to be seen in terms of their economic value.

By contextualising intersectional analysis within the history of participants' struggles, the study was able to make sense of how discourses of race and racialisation have changed over time in Australia. In particular, I developed an appreciation of how Australian society has historically maintained stereotypes of Asian passivity in part to neutralise their earlier constructions during the height of the White Australian era as a threat and menace to white Australian workers (Ang, 2003). Some leaders have integrated the model minority myth (Cho, 1997; Yeh, 2014) into their identity work, positioning themselves as 'sidekicks' to their white Australian peers in attempts to neutralise their sense of power and authority in their organisations and therefore mitigate their followers' resistance.

Paying attention to history also requires researchers to be sensitive to how different social movements can in turn trade one form of equality for other forms of oppression. This compromise can be observed in the commodification of multiculturalism that resurfaced at the start of this decade within an 'Asian Century' discourse (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). The Asian Century discourse emphasises the economic rise of Asia and is concerned with how Australia can 'seize the economic opportunities that will flow' through trade partnerships (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012: ii). Through a stated desire to become 'Asia ready', businesses have begun touting the need for ethno-culturally diverse leadership in Australia (O'Leary and Tilly, 2014). However, the focus of

much of this discussion has been on primarily elite class, first generation Asian Australians in senior executive ranks. Mapping these recent calls for leadership diversity onto the history of Chinese migration in Australia suggests that we have moved away from collective struggles for labour and citizenship rights towards individual struggles for senior leadership positions. This movement thus individualises the historical and systemic professional barriers for people of Asian descent in Australia, while continuing to commodify 'Asianness' in the so-called Asian Century. By remaining attuned to social histories, intersectional research has the potential to critique contemporary trends and identify how the pursuit for racial equality in some cases can obscure equally oppressive imperialist, capitalist and neoliberal systems of domination.

Challenges to intersectional practice

Applications of radical intersectional theory to practice will not be without its challenges. Specifically, my work with Chinese Australian leaders suggested some dominant tendencies to assume both a staunchly single-axis perspective and an essentialist view of identity (Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). These assumptions fix organisational members to identity categories, treating them as homogenous and limiting their capacity to derive whole identities (Chun et al., 2013; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007).

Despite the participants' experiences of how multiple identity axes intersected in their day-to-day interactions, their articulation of intersectionality was impeded by institutionalised single-axis discourses that permeate Australian society and many organisations. In recent years, inequalities have been collapsed under the umbrella term of 'diversity', with mainstream academic and practitioner texts chiefly reducing diversity to a managerial activity focussed on increasing the 'body count' of so-called 'minority' employees (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005; Sinclair, 2006; Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010; Zanoni et al., 2010). Within this paradigm, diversity initiatives overwhelmingly focus on pre-established categories of difference like gender and culture (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012), while other forms of inequality are seen as competing frames.

Some of the participants in the study seemed compelled to choose one inequality to attribute their experience. Melinda, for example, deliberated over which discrimination has affected her the most: 'race hasn't affected me that much; gender sometimes, though I haven't had major issues around sexism [...] for me, it's more my age'. These assessments reflected the issues that were permitted and those rendered unspeakable within the diversity discourses of their organisations. This tendency suggested that the language for recognising and conveying

interlocking oppressions is not yet readily available for organisational members, while prevailing pressures to choose from 'competing' discriminations are grounded in wider systems of power.

The single-axis discourses of organisations further prompted organisational members to individualise discrimination, rather than see discrimination as embedded in systems of domination and reinforced through processes of differentiation. When I interviewed Chinese women leaders, a common experience they shared was being repeatedly told throughout their careers that they lacked confidence. Lynn, a senior manager in a financial services firm, held a magnetic and charismatic presence from our first meeting. Despite her genial manner, she was frequently confronted by her managers and peers with the attribution that she lacked confidence. Some of her responses suggested that she accepted this assessment and saw confidence building as her personal project of leadership development. The stereotypically 'hyper-feminine' attributes of Asian women as quiet, submissive and long-suffering (Tajima, 1989) were first imposed on my female participants, then framed by their organisations as individual deficiencies that they needed to correct, thereby eliding considerations of wider structural inequalities as well as patriarchal, white supremacist and colonial ideologies.

Closely related to the dominant single-axis frame was the prevalent assumption that identities are primordial essences. Grounded in historical images of Chinese people in Australia as homogenous Others of the 'yellow hordes' (Mayer, 2013), stereotypical attributes like introversion and submissiveness were treated as innate attributes for all people of East Asian descent. The essentialist view was internalised by many of my participants, who often ended up perpetuating virulent stereotypes by describing negative aspects of themselves as 'typically' Chinese.

Intersectionality nevertheless has the potential to account for the plurality of identities that comprise any group, which allow single-axis frames and essentialist identity categories to be questioned or even rejected altogether (Chun et al., 2013; MacKinnon, 2013; McCall, 2013). I attempted to capture the intracategorical complexity (McCall, 2013) of Chinese Australians methodologically through my selection of participants. This meant keeping definitions around what it meant to be 'Chinese Australian' deliberately loose in the recruitment process to accommodate for participants' self-definitions. While categories of race and ethnicity are inexorably informed by wider societal discourses, I inclined towards an emic approach as much as possible to avoid imposing universalistic notions of those categories (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

For example, I met An-Rong through my study, who was born in Australia to Vietnamese-born parents, but identified as Chinese through his ancestry. Through An-Rong and other participants who chose to embrace a Chinese identity amidst ethnic and national ambiguity, I attempted to show that groupist ethnic/national demarcations are not so clear-cut as dominant discourses suggest (Ang, 2014). By taking participants' self-identifications as the starting point, the study aimed to make amends for the difficulties of identification, belonging and agency experienced by non-white people within multicultural Australia (Ang, 2014; Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Hage, 1998). Further, accommodating for a more processual and flexible approach to identity facilitates the formation of strategic group positions that have the potential to forge collective political struggles (Chun et al., 2013).

Sharing and connecting our biographies through the interviews offered avenues through which to articulate and honour participants' intersectional lived experiences. As intersectional approaches have vividly illustrated, the complexity of individuals' quotidian interactions and life experiences of marginalisation cannot be understood without taking into consideration the individual's gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, class and age that varyingly intersect at different points in time to simultaneously produce oppression and privilege (Simien, 2007). Weaving intersectional considerations into our discussions through observations and questions (e.g., 'that sounds like to me he assumed you were the shy Asian woman stereotype', 'do you think that would've been different if you were straight?') opened up ways for the leaders to understand their experiences through the more nuanced discourses of intersectionality.

A recurring theme in the interviews was my interpreting of the ways in which the participants' leadership work subverted systems of domination via the overlapping interpersonal, structural and hegemonic domains of power. For example, I discussed with Jay, a risk manager of a financial services firm, the ways in which his emphasis on sensuality and empathy with his employees subverted masculinist norms of leadership as command and conquest (Collinson and Hearn, 1996; Kerfoot and Knights, 1993). Andrea's decision to put the first Aboriginal model on the cover of an Australian magazine as Editor-in-Chief against the advice of her Board that 'black models don't sell' could be understood as challenging white aesthetic standards as well as the power-blind pursuit of profit. Sales Executive Jeff and I also talked through the ways in which his efforts to establish an interdepartmental diversity council and secure the advocacy of his company's most senior managers sought to manoeuvre power within and beyond existing hierarchical structures while attempting to challenge the invisible hegemony of whiteness of diversity management (Grimes, 2002).

Concluding remarks on epistemic violence

Intersectionality offers a valuable theoretical and methodological framework to advise critical organisational scholarship. By peering between the cracks of multiple marginalities (and privileges), intersectional research bears the potential to gain insights from people who may remain overlooked in existing organisational theory and practice. Despite its promising potential, intersectionality has been found in recent years to be at risk of being co-opted through both research and practice to reproduce white supremacist patriarchy (Carastathis, 2008; Cho et al., 2013; Mohanty, 2013; Nash, 2008; Rodriguez and Freeman, 2016). Indeed, when detached from its social justice roots, intersectional studies of organisations can at times appear to collect and commodify 'minority' subjects without a broader attention to how prevailing systems of domination may be reinforced.

Grounded in traditions of anti-colonialism and Black feminism, I have discussed the ways I drew on intersectionality in my research design and analysis of Chinese Australian leadership with a view to changing social meanings around what it means to be 'Chinese'. Specifically, I drew on my biography and aligned my research with the politics of subjects who shared my identification and struggles. I further located my subjects' struggles in the sociohistorical context of Chinese migration in Australia to better contextualise how colonial and racial ideologies over time work to delegitimise people of Chinese descent from the work of leadership. Future intersectional research may guard against the deradicalisation of this important framework. By considering the dimensions of biography and history in future analyses of marginalised subjects, intersectional theorising may continue to challenge and transform systems of domination.

The dual tools of biography and history force researchers to confront prevailing inequities by raising questions about who can look at whose intersectionality. I would caution against a universal criterion mandating that researchers share the identifications of their research subjects. However, it is also not possible to sustain systemic ignorance, enjoying the moral comfort of denial of the ways our theorising is complicit with imperialism, white supremacy, capitalism or patriarchy (Moreton-Robinson, 2011).

Critical, reflexive research lays bare the entangled dynamics of power inherent in knowledge production. When researchers are 'outsiders' to the social group being studied, they reflect on how and why they have come to investigate the group members. They call into question the hegemonic relations of power that may have afforded them the authority to 'know' the social group. In the case of organisational research, for example, white researchers who have been awarded grants to study diversity management may speak out against their own racial privilege that

bestows upon them the right to control and benefit from 'difference' (hooks, 1992; Leong, 2012; Liu, 2017c). Non-white researchers studying different non-white groups can examine biographical resonances that allow them to align their research with their racialised subjects, while interrogating their own relative powers and privileges, if any.

Still, history begs us to consider the specific locations from which we theorise intersectional structures and identities. My suggestions above for radical intersectional research reflect my views of the fraught yet relatively privileged positions of middle-class East Asian migrants in Australia. The harm may be too profound in other cases, such as in the colonial relations between Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and white Anglo Australians. In such cases, it may be appropriate to reject the reproduction of white patriarchal knowledge altogether and leave intersectional theory and activism to its rightful custodians.

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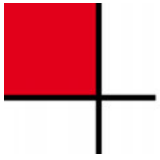
Queer organising and performativity: Towards a norm-critical conceptualisation of organisational intersectionality*

Jannick Friis Christensen

abstract

This paper addresses recent debates of critical performativity and queer theory in critical management studies to develop new, norm-critical methods for critical diversity management. It does so by reading across these debates and, in particular, engaging with the concept of intersectionality. This concept dislocates attention from one diversity category to multiple categories, and how they, by their intersections, produce specific identities and power relations. Building on this, and through empirical observations of norm-critical workshop facilitation in two case organisations, the paper develops a norm-critical method for visualising intersecting diversity categories while, at the same time, transgressing them in order to acknowledge difference without having it fixed as such – presented as ephemeral moments of intersectionality. In addition to illustrating how a reflexive approach to underlying structures of norms in (an) organisation can also render visible unmarked categories of power and privilege, the author discusses possible implications of the suggested norm-critical method of intervention for research and practices of diversity management, with emphasis on the kind of critique that is performed.

Introduction

This paper addresses seemingly deadlocked discussions in critical management studies (CMS) about organisational intersectionality. On the one hand, the mainstream functionalist approach to diversity in organisation and management studies (OMS) is criticised for being performative. Its critical counterpart is, on the other hand, criticised for its non-performative intent, that is to say, for taking a diametrical opposition to performative managerialism (Parker and Parker, 2017). In other words, CMS criticises the use of diversity, including a lack of analytical sensitivity towards intersectional issues in OMS, but is itself criticised for not mobilising in practice the insights that the criticism brings about. I will in this introductory section provide a brief summary of this academic debate and, in line with other critical diversity scholars, problematise the absence of employee diversity in organisations while simultaneously outlining crucial shortcomings to the ways diversity as difference is traditionally conceptualised in the OMS literature in essentialist terms. The essentialist approach remains blind to how power, history and culture form particular gendered, raced, classed and sexed perceptions of workers (Ahonen et al., 2014). These structured discourses place certain expectations on individual behaviour based on what is normalised and becomes the norm for a given socially constructed category (Ashcraft, 2013).

It is well established in OMS that diversity, if managed properly, can lead to improved organisational performance (e.g. Williams and Mavin, 2014; Qin et al., 2014). Companies are, following this modernist rationale, thought to be able to improve their economic bottom lines by actively valuing socio-demographic differences among their employees (e.g. Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000; Cox and Blake, 1991). Consequently, diversity management is turned into a strategic approach to human resource management (HRM), as organising diversity becomes a means to successfully attaining corporate goals (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000).

It is, however, also a well-known fact within CMS that such a functionalist business case approach to diversity tends to hide power relations by 'naturalising diversity as a group's universal fixed essence' (Zanoni and Janssens, 2003: 57), based on the assumption that the ascribed socio-demographic characteristics are constitutive for these essences. It is, as a result, 'assume[d] that diversity is a universal and objective fact that can be described, measured, and used' (*ibid.*), meaning diversity is conceived of as reality in contemporary organisations rather than as a social construct reflecting existing power relations. Thus, the extant critical diversity literature calls out a built-in sameness-difference dilemma, since employee diversity is either assimilated or marginalised (Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). In both cases, diversity remains invisible and an idle force of exclusion-inclusion mechanisms in organisational settings.

From a critical and post-structural, rather than a universal and objective, perspective, diversity becomes a social construction (Holck et al., 2016). The way people are perceived as either same or different therefore depends on local subjective and relational perceptions (Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013). Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) demonstrate how the structures and discourses change across time and place, while Zanoni and Janssens (2007) make it clear that organisational interest in diversity is an identity-regulating factor that implies power dynamics at all times and in any context, albeit in ever-changing ways (Schwabenland and Tomlinson, 2015). The meaning of 'critical' in critical diversity studies has in this way come to denote exposure of and reflection upon established ideas and modes of organising with an emancipatory potential that is, generally speaking, yet to be realised.

Performative diversity management, defined as forms of knowledge production exclusively serving economic efficiency (Cabantous et al., 2016), is, in other words, found to be prone to marginalise employees by reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices that provoke and widen gaps between people. As attention is paid – literally speaking – to the business imperative, the broader picture is neglected; aspects of social justification, such as issues of identity and power, are disguised. The point is that the practice of managing diversity becomes performative in actively producing socio-demographic differences in the workforce, and that these differences are not necessarily relevant a priori the process of organising diversity, but are rather products of the power-laden operations of the focal organisation (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). Yet, if mainstream – that is to say, instrumental – diversity management is performative, there is reason to believe that a critical approach to organising diversity can become (critically) performative too.

Queering intersectionality: A norm-critical way forward?

Intersectionality, in this regard, seems to fall short as a heuristic framework for intervention, since intersectionality always-already relies on working with the very same categories that a critically performative approach has as its foreground to queer in the rejection of 'normal', resisting any one definition of diversity, insisting on multiplicity instead (Pullen et al., 2016a). Queering, as Parker (2002: 148; see also 2016) puts it, is 'an attitude of unceasing disruptiveness', which is at the heart of critical deconstruction of demographic categories and knowledge, thereby breaking with the repetition of the 'normalised' (Muhr et al., 2016; Muhr and Sullivan, 2013). The crucial argument for queering such categories is that they 'obscure differential experiences and re-affirm existing inequalities' (King, 2016: 9). As recently noted by Ashcraft and Muhr (2017), these categories often depend on constructed dualisms, e.g. the gender binary of women/men where both appear to be mutually exclusive, since the binary understanding of diversity asserts

oppositional poles of privilege and disadvantage, respectively, where, citing Dougherty and Hode (2016: 1731), 'the privileged poles of binaries sets tend to be linked to other privileged poles' and vice versa. Moreover, such dichotomous understandings of diversity foreclose intersectional experiences.

If we as scholars are to engage with intersectional realities in organisations, and if such an engagement is to have any critically performative outcome, the question is how to work with categorisations while simultaneously overriding them, that is to say, how to 'visiblise' (e.g. Widerberg, 2000) multiple and intersecting social identities without simultaneously reducing them as such. In a concluding remark, Holck and Muhr (2017: 10) recently suggested a norm-critical way forward, with which they wish to nurture 'critical awareness of the latent danger of fixing differences to the detriment of the skills and experiences a diverse group of employees brings to the organisations, while keeping in mind the value of recognizing differences'. The question then is how to work in such a norm-critical manner. If we buy into the critical argument for transgressing the categories, then we have to understand how the categories come into the picture in the first place. That is, we must move beyond objectifying categories and, in their place, explicate the social relations – the norms – that rule people's knowing and doing in organisational settings (Campbell, 2016).

The purpose of this paper is to examine what it would entail to approach organisational intersectionality norm critically by including the power of normalisation, i.e. by continuously challenging the explicit and implicit norms that underlie organisational practices and that structure social relations, standards and expectations (Ghorashi and Ponzoni, 2014). The argument put forward in this paper, in a nutshell, is that intersectionality is an important leap forward, from paying attention to one category at a time, to attending to several categories and their interrelated flows of power at once, but that the next step – moving from investigation to intervention as well as from a performative/non-performative dichotomy to critical performativity – is to reject categorisation (or at least keep it in suspense) by means of continuous critical reflection on underlying norms of organisational intersectionality. I by no means intend to replace intersectionality studies with norm critique. Rather, I want to suggest that norm critique is a method with which one can analyse the effects of what I in the analysis suggest to be ephemeral moments of intersectionality while intervening in existing organisational practices and managerial discourses of diversity.

The research aim of this paper is to conceptualise norm critique based on a combined reading of queer theory and critical performativity, and subsequently to illustrate empirically how to advance norm-critical methods for intervention following such critically performative queer theory. In merging queer theory with

critical performativity, arriving at a queer performativity that is open to organisational realities of intersectionality, I move on to clarify what constitutes a critical norm, after which I elaborate on the kind of critique that is performed. Norm critique, as presented in this paper, takes inspiration from organisations whose members experience the discrimination and repression associated with the intersections of multiple identities. This could be considered an 'intersectional' research approach to the extent that the study is conducted with the influence of the people it is about (see e.g. IGLYO, 2014). I will for that reason reflect upon the empirical context and background of this study in connection with the analytical illustrations. In addition to illustrating how a reflexive approach to underlying structures of norms in organisations can render unmarked categories as well as intersecting diversity categories visible while, at the same time, transgressing them in order to acknowledge difference without it being fixed as such, I discuss possible implications of the suggested norm-critical method for research and practices of diversity management.

Queer performativity as ephemeral intersectionality

This section positions norm critique as the interplay of queer theory and critical performativity – queer performativity in short. I subscribe to the work of Pullen et al. (2016b) in arguing that queer is a form of immanent critique, as queering entails a rejection of categorical thinking – hence the potential for critical performativity and for exploring emerging, ephemeral moments of intersectionality.

Practitioners and researchers alike have to various extents relied on putting workers into neat and tidy demographic groups for convenience samples, which is probably why Nkomo and Hoobler (2014) describe the diversity literature as being almost deaf to the reality of intersectionality. Attending to one category at a time is, from an intersectional perspective, insufficient if we want to understand multiple intersecting processes of identification, meaning that simply listing the accumulated effects of each category is not an option either. Queering is, in that regard, not a question of 'neutralising' the binaries that currently inform subjectivity intersectionally, e.g. the gender binary man/woman, by introducing an alleged 'third' position, which is one form of multiplicity as laid out in extant literature (e.g. Linstead and Pullen, 2006). Nor is it an attempt at replacing 'old' categories with new ones. This would arguably be a form of multiplicity as sameness in the sense that subjectivity is still limited to binary conceptions, e.g. masculinities and femininities, albeit acknowledging a plural understanding as opposed to masculinity and femininity in the singular form. The queer pose is as such one that withstands the closure inherent in the binary logic of being either/or

(it would, in rejecting categorisation, rather be neither/nor), because queering, ontologically speaking, suggests being as both/and, i.e. endless becomings of differences (Ashcraft and Muhr, 2017).

Accordingly, this paper is not discussing a queer position in the definitive form, or in any absolute sense, or as something one is because queer is never one (Just et al., 2017; Pullen et al., 2016a). On the contrary, it is the active, dynamic (as in non-static) form of queer*ing* that is the point of departure, meaning queer is not something one is (constative); it is something one *does* (performative) and then becomes, although such queerness is, for the same reason, difficult to uphold. That would, in principle, be an endless practice of queering, and hence of becoming, as the queerness would otherwise become identical with itself and thus, strictly speaking, cease to be queer.

Queering or queerness puts into practice Butler's assertion that discursive categories, including gender and sexuality, are performative in constituting what they name (King, 2016):

> [Gender] is thus not the product of choice, but the forcible citation of a *norm*, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment. Indeed, there is not 'one' who takes on a gender norm. On the contrary, this citation of the gender norm is necessary in order to qualify as a 'one', to become viable as a 'one', where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms. (Butler, 2011/1993: 266, emphasis added)

Individuals must, to put it differently, repeat and thereby produce norms to be recognised as individuals, or as professionals, at a workplace. There is, however, more to the quote, namely that norms do not exist outside their repetitions (Just et al., 2017), meaning norms depend just as much on the repetition as individuals do if the norms are to obtain a persisting false naturalness. Governing social norms are, from this point of view, something we install collectively as enough of us – a majority – perpetuate them through continuous repetitions. This also implies that there is a critical performative potential for action, for change, if the norms are repeated with alterity. Subversion of the norm is by no means guaranteed, as repetitions with a difference might as well fail in denaturalising norms (Allen, 1998) – a case of failed performativity (Fleming and Banerjee, 2015). But queering, as practised by the organisations presented in this paper, is not necessarily a question of introducing new normativities. Rather, queering is about being open to the intersectional experiences of others.

As Parker and Parker (2017) point out, critical performativity – as spearheaded by Spicer et al. (2016; 2009) – rests on a Butlerian reading of discourse conditioning performativity. Discourse captures vital aspects of dominant organisational

activity, is useful for empirical analysis and is, for those two reasons, apt for a critical performative view on organisations (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011), not to mention the act of organising diversity. Trittin and Schoenborn (2015), for instance, show how a discursive perspective on diversity may help to shift focus away from the individual-bound demographic criteria applied in the seemingly contradictive performative/non-performative traditions of diversity management. Instead, the authors theorise how diversity can be understood as a form of discursive representation where different voices become visible and present in organisations. However, as the authors also mention, whether different voices get to contribute to the discursive diversity of organisations depends on the degree to which these voices can also voice difference *structurally* in organisational settings.

Viewing diversity as discourse furthermore helps to explain why some diversity objectives are not met when diversity communication is kept from being performative, critically, due to the constative nature of much diversity reporting (for an example of this, see Christensen and Muhr, 2017). In such cases there tends to be incongruence between talk and action. However, this suggests a static relationship that only pays lip service to temporality. Diversity initiatives could, as is the case with CSR initiatives in Christensen et al. (2013), be seen as 'aspirational talk', i.e. a communicated desired place to be, meaning discrepancies between talk and action are inevitable – and perhaps even desirable. Such aspirational talk would, potentially, allow for new organisational subjectivities to emerge by means of 'talking into existence' (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014) new spaces for different realities that make available new subject positions to speak from. As Cabantous et al. (2016: 197) point out, the constitution of subjects 'is an inherently material and discursive construct, and happens through the political engineering of sociomaterial agencements', and it is this insight that takes us back to the Butlerian understanding of discourse as the very condition of performativity.

Alvesson and Kärreman (2011; see also 2000) problematise a sole focus on discursive practice that leaves the non-discursive unattended to, which is why this paper takes a particular interest in the governing social norms that discourse – presumably – is anchored in. If performativity is conditioned by discourse, subjects are, by inference, constituted by discourse, although not necessarily discursively determined. This is the assertion of critical performativity (Nentwich et al., 2015). If 'identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (Butler, 1990: 34), the logical conclusion is that being – in any emancipatory sense of the word – entails doing differently, i.e. allowing for variation to enter the repetition. In order to be critical and avoid 'failed performativities' (Fleming and Banerjee, 2015), critical performativity has to include the studied organisation in its 'entirety', as it not only constitutes

organisational subjects; it is also itself performatively constituted (Cabantous et al., 2016). Thus, in taking forward critical performativity:

> [W]e cannot assume that managers (or employees, shareholders, etc.) are unitary subjects who can change themselves. Rather, they are complex subjects moving between subject positions where identity and agency is performatively constituted within and through different circulating discourses [...] Thus, a political theory of performativity needs to understand and then change the terms within and through which subjects constitute identities within organisational subject positions. That is, we should not focus only on change to spoken words, but to the identity-constituting, *norm*-infested discourses that precede subjects. (Cabantous et al., 2016: 205, emphasis added)

A critically performative methodology must, for that reason, 'undo' organisational performativity, which, as suggested by Riach et al. (2016), can be done through 'anti-narrative' research. This entails reflexive undoing of organisational subjectivities and the very normative conditions upon which these subjectivities depend. The raison d'être of the methodology is its applicability in revealing the processes and governmental norms by which workplace subjectivities are shaped – a process that also allows us to tap into the identity work that goes into presenting oneself as an intelligible organisational subject:

> As such, a reflexive undoing must contrast with a more performative, organisational undoing in revealing lived experiences of being subject to the 'rules and *norms*' we are required to conform to 'if we are to exist' not simply in a physical sense, but as viable, social subjects, within and through organisational settings. (*ibid.*: 7, emphasis added)

Hence, this approach of norm-critical performativity allows for examination of the normative conditions of organisational recognition as well as the consequences of misrecognition (*ibid.*), and, in doing so, opens up a discursive space for change. Actionable knowledge, i.e. applied norm-critical research, entails what Fleming and Spicer (2003) describe as a shift in focus from qualities within employees to *externalities*. The object of inquiry is one's approach to diversity, not diversity itself. This has the potential to open doors to other practices of diversity with an emancipatory perspective otherwise shut down by the dominant direction of current diversity production emanating from the financial imperative (Omanović, 2013).

A practical example of 'externalising' the problem is found in Staunæs and Søndergaard (2008a: 4-5), where the authors explain in detail how they created a space for organisational reflexivity by articulating a new language, a new way of narrating the corporate reality, with new possibilities for action. For instance, instead of subscribing to a binary (common-sensical) understanding that reduces genders to 'women' and 'men', the researchers constructed a neologism of

'managers in female and male bodies', which allowed them to also discuss the intersectionalities of male bonding, masculinities and (referring to ethnic-racialised hierarchies) cultural cloning. While Staunæs and Søndergaard are careful not to conclude that their research was indeed performative critically (they talk about *usefulness* from different epistemological positions), it arguably resulted in discursive openings from queering (*troubling* in their words) the binary distinction of women and men. The queer pose shed light on a company norm for management that displaced women and men alike who failed to perform masculinity correctly (that is to say in a manner congruous with their bodies) and as such deviated from the norm – in other words, how management as a discipline was gendered. Moreover, whiteness and social and professional background were found to be embedded in the masculinity norm. Queering, therefore, seems to be imperative if diversity work is to become 'useful' in the critically performative sense of the word and not simply confirm and reproduce existing underlying normative rationalities in organisations.

Norm critique and its critical potential for intersectional organisation studies

In continuation of the above theorisation of norm critique, this paper will go one step further in also advancing norm-critical methods as they may manifest following such critically performative queer theory. Norm critique, I contend, is the form a critically performative queering may take in practice and as a method for intervention.

Defining organisational norms

To comprehend this conceptual framework, we must first investigate what constitutes a critical norm and how it works. Norms can be (and are in the work of both case organisations) defined as unwritten – in some cases written – rules and expectations that become precepts for behaviour. Norms should therefore *not* be thought of as certain standards, e.g. espoused values and beliefs, as is commonly the case if, for instance, applying the cultural perspective of Schein (2004). The point is that norms are constituted performatively as they are continually repeated in, by and through organisation(s) and, consequently, become normalised. Social norms thereby establish a sort of business-as-usual as the 'normal' thing to do, including how to conduct yourself in given situations at work if you are to be recognised as a – using Butler's (2011/1993) terminology – 'viable one'. In that sense, you become a subject *of* organisation. This understanding of norms aligns better with what Schein (2004) defines as basic underlying assumptions, since the norms appear as the (only) 'natural' thing to do in a specific (work) context. This

is not the same as saying that norms cannot be expressed in espoused values and beliefs, merely that established ideas and norms work at a 'deeper' level. They come to function as self-evident ways of doing things in particular situations and have implications for identity construction (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) when, for instance, feeding into the social categories to which individuals are ascribed. Consequently, norms are taken for granted, as they are naturalised over time and therefore become invisible to the naked eye – or at least difficult to spot – until someone breaks with the norm in failing to perform in accordance with the organisational expectations that a given norm gives birth to.

Take this sentence as a somewhat banal, yet illustrative, example. You probably noticed that it is written in a colour that makes the font stand out in comparison to the paragraphs above. Your exposure to the unusual choice of colour for the text probably made you aware of the fact that texts are normally printed in black, the point being that you weren't giving it much of a thought until just now. Presented with a text that deviates from the default colour code, however, made you painfully aware of the font colour norm, black, and you most likely have an opinion about whether it's right or wrong of me to use different colours in academic writing. Maybe it makes my work appear a little frivolous. Perhaps it's desirable for different reasons. Regardless, to avoid sanctions (in this case questions from perplexed reviewers, not meeting the standard requirements for publication, etc.), surely it'd be easier for me simply to adhere to the norm and it wouldn't be 'abnormal' to receive that recommendation, e.g. from a reviewer or the editor. This is precisely where and how norms derive 'their' power: from ideas of normality and processes of adherence to often tacit norms.

Referring back to Schein (2004: 12), norms can, in line with the example above, be understood as shared assumptions, in which case they derive power from the fact that they are taken for granted and get to operate outside awareness. They are as such non-questionable and affect organisational behaviour because an act based on any other premise than the norm is inconceivable due to the false naturalisation of the norm. From this point of view, norms not only affect organisational structures; they *are* structuring mechanisms of organisation. Norms are in that sense a form of culture control that normalises 'irrational' behaviour, the point being that what constitutes rational and irrational, respectively, is judged from a given norm(ative perspective). Certain values are deemed self-evident. It's like – paraphrasing Kunda (1992/2001: 353) – having a religion without knowing how you got it. As a religious or ideological belief is normalised, it gets to shape lived experiences of self, of one's identities, and, as a result, construct certain expectations to live up to (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Norms, in other words, inform identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) based on the socially established truths about what is normal, meaning norms, from a managerial

perspective, have an identity regulatory potential. It is, however, a subtle form of power that, based on historical and cultural categories of difference and sameness, casts some (groups of) people into predefined roles that are noticed as being different, while others, the norm, may go under the radar as the (company) custom around which everyone else is deemed diverse.

Norm critique is an exposure of this kind of power in relation to a (post-structuralist) self that is contingent, fragmented and conditioned by context, e.g. one's perception of the expectations of significant others, with the organisation itself typically materialising as one such other (Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2013). The self and one's identity is therefore constantly negotiated relative to the surroundings, i.e. it is constructed by – repeating Cabantous et al. (2016) – norm-infested discourses. Norm critique, as also recently noted by Henriksson (2017), is a development in queer resistance that seeks to challenge institutionalised norms and hence existing power relations too. It originates, broadly speaking, from queer theory and related pedagogical practices but has, for instance in Sweden, spread and developed into a mode of governance for some of the public institutions that play a role in producing the societal norms which norm critique seeks to dismantle. Norm critique is therefore not only queer but also potentially performative, critically, in its attempt at denaturalising and hence repoliticising dominant norms as a contingent and contested terrain by means of explicating the norms. In doing so, norm critique may render visible 'apolitical' discourses of, for instance, 'merit' and 'inclusion' (e.g. Christensen and Muhr, forthcoming 2018) and address complicated issues of how and why people are treated differently in relation to the intersectional interplay of norms around gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. The performed critique is as such about making life harder and more challenging, rather than easier and more agreeable (Raffnsøe, 2017).

A critique beyond criticism

New normativities are not the end goal per se – at least not for the organisations presented in this paper. Being critical is not an end in itself either. Norm critique, as practised by the case organisations, is, I propose, about revitalising diversity work. As an example of this, Janssens and Zanoni (2014) argue that 'classical' diversity management reduces ethnic minority employees to representatives of a stigmatised social group by focusing on individuals' cognitive biases towards (out-)group members. The alternative approach suggested by the authors, on the other hand, juggles with a new normal that broadens the views on dominant norms and identities to redefine a new standard all employees alike are measured against, which to some extent counteracts – at the structural level – some inequality issues. I do not wish to suggest that norm critique somehow suspends normative judgement, but rather that the critical attitude, the unceasing disruptiveness,

involves an *ongoing* normative commitment that never settles. This form of critique – and the reason why I consistently write 'critique' rather than 'criticism' – is to suggest the virtuousness of critique as 'a practical ethical attitude that suspends obedience to authority and general rules (norms) to focus on the cultivation of judiciousness and excellence with regard to the conduct of already existing dispositions and the challenges they present' (Raffnsøe, 2017: 50). Understood this way, critique cannot be formulated as impartial and general criticism from outside; it can only be formulated as a relational critique (Staunæs, 2016).

In order to present a workable method of norm critique, the kind of critique that is performed is not irrelevant. I want to nurture what Staunæs (2016: 66-67) calls an affirmative critique, whose ambition is *not* to reflect 'reality'. Instead, the purpose of norm critique is to 'reconfigure the world', i.e. a practice of worldmaking in the sense that the critical aspect is about bringing to life co-existing organisational realities. Citing Taguchi, Staunæs (2016: 39) explains how affirmative critique is about 'performing a critical tracing of normative articulations and practices on a field of thinking, as well as an experimental mapping exercise that might help us narrate the reality in question differently'. Defined this way, the aim of norm critique is *not* to pass judgement in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, true or false. Rather, the purpose is to take queer postures to overcome dualistic ontological territories, showing contingency, without necessarily determining a specific direction.

Practising affirmative critique of organisational norms has, for my part, on several occasions prompted feelings of falling short as well as an urge to succumb to the expectations from participants to provide all the 'right' answers, 'quick fixes', 'best practices' and 'solutions' to 'their' problems, or what is problematised. However, norm critique is about, as Foucault would phrase it, not being governed quite so much (Butler, 2004). The critique can therefore *not* be formulated in disconnection of what it is critiquing, since it is always-already a critique of something. It should be understood as situated and relational, as it does *not* emerge out of nowhere; it comes from somewhere, this somewhere being given situations and the specific practices that the two case organisations are queering. The remainder of this paper provides the context of the study by presenting the two case organisations, whose norm-critical workshops are shown to affirm ephemeral moments of intersectionality. The empirical insights are, eventually, discussed in relation to the kind of affirmative norm critique that is performed to outline some of the possible implications of the suggested norm-critical method for research and practices of diversity management.

Methods and background to the study

The argument in this paper is built with inspiration from participant observations of the intervention methods of two organisations in particular: Sabaah and FIU-Ligestilling[1]. I will attend to each in turn. The case presentation should be seen as data in co-production (Ashcraft and Muhr, 2017: 18). By this I wish to imply an iterative process of coding as a practice that happened the moment I entered the field, that is to say, during the norm-critical workshops that comprise my data and not just after. Data collection and analysis are for the same reason not accounted for separately in their own subsections but will be elaborated on as I explain my engagement with the case organisations.

Sabaah (meaning new day/beginning in Arabic) is a non-profit interest organisation that seeks to improve the living and working conditions for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) people with minority ethnic backgrounds in Denmark. The organisation of minority ethnic LGBTQ people creates a queer posture, which, according to Just et al. (2017), interconnects performativity and affectivity, thereby enabling queer matters to matter critically because they offer a potential for alternative organising of diversity. For a graphic example, consider how the mere existence of Sabaah, which was established in 2006, symbolises the possibility of being gay *and* Muslim (to perform the intersection of what might otherwise be perceived as two mutually exclusive positions) at the same time, thereby admitting their members to understand themselves from other subject positions than those permitted by the dichotomies of religion and sexual orientation alone. Also, note how 'minority' goes ahead of 'ethnicity', which can be considered a deliberate norm-critical choice. It is the minority position that is considered to be problematic and not people's ethnic backgrounds per se. It is not one's ethnic background but how one is minoritised with reference to ethnicity (or perceptions thereof) that is the focus of Sabaah's interventions.

I became affiliated with Sabaah in May 2016, when I signed up for their project 'Outreach', whose purpose is to prevent stigma and discrimination against people

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[1]   Besides the two case organisations presented in this paper, I have also followed the work of LGBT Denmark (observations of two pilot workshops). The organisation is developing an educational programme to ensure that Danish workplaces offer inclusive, equal and inspiring work environments for LGBT people. The project goes under the name 'Empatisk Arbejdsmarked' (in English: Empathetic Labour Market) and is, in ambition, similar to Stonewall's 'Diversity Champions'. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Rikke Voergård-Olesen, whose work with promoting norm-critical practices in organisations I have followed ad hoc, resulting in inspiring conversations around the arguments of this paper.

with double minority status in relation (but not limited) to sexual orientation, gender identity and ethnicity by means of norm-critical workshop facilitation about rights, culture and norms. In addition to educational material, participatory observations and reflections from discussions and walk-throughs of exercises at the initial two-day crash course, I also draw on my own experiences of facilitating workshops as part of the Outreach project (12 participatory observations and counting). In doing research for this present study while performing the role of an educator in Sabaah, I could embrace a more collective approach to reflexivity (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015): bi-monthly all facilitators meet to share immediate thoughts with peers to get feedback. Hence, my engagement with Sabaah is not just an afterthought; it should be seen as ongoing.

Viewing my fieldwork as a relational endeavour, I expected it to be counterproductive for me to record workshops because one purpose of such a workshop was to establish a safe(r) space for identification and for learning. This would potentially have been undermined if everything the participants said was recorded and transcribed verbatim. I therefore opted for note-taking instead, which was left to immediate recall (e.g. McCormack and Anderson, 2010; McCormack, 2012) due to my active participation in facilitating the workshops I observed. Taking notes during the workshops was not an option, as this would most likely have disturbed the flow of the workshop, with potential detrimental effects to the learning space created. In spite of the obvious possibility of me having misrepresented recollections, this potential misgiving is minimised by the fact that we are always two facilitators 'in the field' and take time to evaluate together after each workshop. These evaluations are also archived in writing and used for the follow-up meetings every other month.

My analytical interest in the intersectional potential of norm critique was sparked when reading through the sheet with comments from my co-facilitators, who seemed to have made observations similar to my own. Many of them highlighted how in particular one exercise – which the analysis is structured around – apparently enabled workshop participants to discuss intersectional issues but with organisational and societal norms as points of reference. The ethnographic method of participatory observation is in this regard a deliberate choice on my part to avoid privileging the voices of my co-facilitators over those of the workshop participants. I agree with Yanow (2012) that the critical aspect of ethnography lies with its quality of being open to the multivoicedness of the research field (see also Staunæs and Søndergaard, 2008a). I wanted to experience the reactions of participants first-hand and in different settings, which is why I also immersed myself in the work of FIU-Ligestilling.

FIU-Ligestilling is a collaboration between three of the biggest Danish trade unions (3F, Dansk Metal and Serviceforbundet – all organising mainly skilled and unskilled workers) with the aim of promoting workplace equality. In 2017, they launched a three-year LGBT+ project (funded by LO – The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions) that aims at upgrading union and work environment representatives to tackle issues related to gender identities and sexual orientations from a norm-critical angle in order to prevent discriminatory work practices and ensure a more inclusive workplace. The data include six (and counting) participatory observations from FIU-Ligestilling. While Sabaah and FIU-Ligestilling have dissimilar target groups, their workshops are similar in their norm-critical and dialogue-based approach to teaching, whereby attendees are actively engaged through various exercises designed to foster critical reflections around dominant organisational norms and how some of these can be needlessly exclusionary to some people who do not 'fit' or perform the idealised norms. These exercises, relating back to Choo and Ferree (2010), are used to draw attention to the *unmarked* categories where power and privilege cluster by way of having everybody experience the underlying dynamics of sameness–difference (Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013) and related processes of exclusion–inclusion. These ephemeral moments of experiencing one's relationship with the other guided my interest towards the argument for a norm-critical approach to organisational intersectionality.

Both of the above-mentioned projects had an outspoken focus on what could be labelled LGBTQ+ issues, e.g. the normative workplace expectation of sexual minorities coming out of the closet by actively disclosing (as opposed to passing) their sexual orientations. Yet, these issues were addressed primarily by rendering visible the norms that would animate such expectations, in this case a heteronormative work environment that keeps employees from seeing that, for instance, heterosexuals out themselves too. However, 'coming out' as heterosexual appears to be normal and therefore tends to go unnoticed and has different consequences (if any) in spite of being, in essence, the exact same action. Examples of heterosexual disclosures can, as also discussed during the workshops, be found everywhere – including at work, when colleagues talk about what they did with their families during the weekend, or when they bring their partner to work-related social gatherings, or when they have a picture of a spouse on their desk. Having norms as a common denominator also opened up an exploration of other and non-LGBTQ+-related issues, and how they relate intersectionally, as they became topical during the workshops. One example is situational ideals for what constitutes a 'good' employee or leader (e.g. Staunæs and Søndergaard, 2008a). Or, to give another example, emotional labour (e.g. Coupland et al., 2008): what feelings are welcomed and what are sanctioned and whether all employees have

equal access to display certain emotions regardless of their gender identity or sexuality.

Next, I will show how the norm-critical workshop spaces cared for such ephemeral moments of intersectionality by means of embracing productive confusion, or what we during the workshops proclaimed as 'loving provocations', to repetitively disturb existing normative paths of business-as-usual. This, in itself, involves a break with the performative/non-performative binary to open up the analytical playing field for a queer performativity that is critical by juxtaposing the poles; not to arrive at an alleged 'third' place, but to keep any such arrival in suspense, acknowledging the position of not knowing fully and instead encouraging curiosity towards what might come next – an ethics of hesitancy (Kofoed and Staunæs, 2015).

Two cases for norm-critical spaces

Having established a conceptual framework apt for showing how norm critique is, in its rejection of categorisation, always also potentially intersectional in its approach to organisational diversity, I will now illustrate this theoretical claim empirically by turning to the two case organisations: Sabaah and FIU-Ligestilling. My analytical emphasis is on what I call ephemeral moments of intersectionality. I carefully convey the intersectional experiences presented as ephemeral to underline how they are context-bound and for the same reason do not necessarily last over time. The following should therefore be judged not with generalisability in mind, but rather on the value the insights bring about in terms of substantiating and nuancing the theoretical and conceptual understanding of the intersectional potential of norm critique in its oscillations between visiblising categories and, at the same time, transgressing them. The relation between norm critique and intersectionality is therefore one where multiple and coexisting identities can be examined in their simultaneity by means of understanding the norms and not necessarily whether the identities comply with or are in opposition to the norms. To allow the workshop participants to reflect on norms and how they interact with identities, they were all invited to take part in an exercise, which was a versioning of a similar activity from IGLYO's (2015) norm-criticism toolkit[2].

Prior to the exercise, which I will get back to, we would as facilitators explain the LGBTQ+ acronym to the participants in order to have a common or shared

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2   IGLYO – The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation is, according to their own website, the largest LGBTQI youth and student network in the world, with over 95 members in more than 40 countries.

language throughout the workshop. However, in line with Choo and Ferree's (2010) call for a design that will denaturalise power relations, focus is *not* on the minority groups of people but rather on the *unmarked* and privileged categories. In other words, a 'majority-inclusive' (Kofoed and Staunæs, 2015) design that also has the identified majority positions as object of inquiry. Instead of dwelling on LGBTQ+, thereby risking stigmatisation, sexualities and gender identities are explained with the norm – that is, cis-gender and heterosexuality – as a point of reference. Interestingly, the workshop participants tended to know all the 'labels' for the minorities (although they were not necessarily able to explain what the labels meant). In contrast to this, they tended not to have an equally developed vocabulary for the majority of people, the norm. What this initial phase of the workshop does, then, is to make the participants literate in discussing diversity issues in relation to norms, which allows the participants – particularly those who 'fit' a norm – to understand their own positions and those of others. I will illustrate this by giving a walk-through of the exercise designed with the intent to expose participants to the dynamics of diversity discourse in organisations, e.g. exclusion-inclusion mechanisms and the associated sameness-difference dilemma that can, as reported in Shore et al. (2011: 1266), lead to assimilation or differentiation.

All participants are asked to write down for themselves five identity markers that represent an attribute or aspect of their identity. They are told to select the identities based on how they see themselves and not how others might see them, in other words, how they self-identify. At times, we as workshop facilitators ask the participants if they think the self-chosen categories would be the same had they been tasked with categorising each other instead. While some participants are convinced that others see them as they see themselves, others believe that they are perceived differently. Regardless, they get to experience the privilege of being able to self-identify rather than having others' assumptions imposed on them.

A few participants are then invited to share their five identities voluntarily. At this stage, we also open up a discussion around the difficulty of finding and labelling your-self with the identity markers. What usually happens is that people who have experienced some kind of friction or tension or maybe even resistance against certain of their identities have little difficulty in finding and adding these identities to their list as important to how they understand themselves. In a network for minority ethnic women, they all easily shared how they see themselves as women and, for some, as feminists, then as mothers – working mothers with minority ethnic backgrounds and in-between two or more cultures. In another workshop a female participant shared how her being a mother becomes relevant in a work context. She mentioned the Danish expression 'raven mother', which is used to describe women who are perceived as neglecting their children and how she, in choosing to have a career alongside having children, sometimes felt labelled as a

raven mother by others, for instance when picking up her children from the nursery just before closing time. Interestingly, there is no equivalent expression in the Danish language for working fathers.

In stark contrast to the above-mentioned accounts is an example from another workshop where a participant in a middle-aged, white male (and assumed heterosexual) body proclaimed that the task was easy and that he only needed one identity marker to capture his person in full: his name. While this is the only time somebody simply mentioned their name, it seems symptomatic of how challenging it is for people who fit various norms – be these idealised forms of leadership or the colour of your skin, sexuality, etc. – to put themselves, categorically, into boxes. It is almost as if they have never been confronted with 'who they are'. It appears to substantiate what Staunæs and Søndergaard (2008b) highlight, namely that the categorical level becomes irrelevant and, as a result, is erased for people who perform and thus carry the norm. This is not to say that gender issues, ethnicity, age, etc. do not matter, quite the contrary, since 'irrelevant' in this case implies that fitting any given norm puts you in a privileged position where you remain unmarked (and unaware) and never get to reflect upon gender and other categories of difference. It is quite telling that those who find themselves in (a) position(s) where they, generally speaking, perform organisational norms frequently came up with identities such as 'the IT expert' or 'the funny guy' – what we could label as individual competencies and personality traits, which are often crowded out when you don't fit organisation-wide norms due to what Kanter (1977: 210) called the 'law of increasing returns'. Since, as individuals, minorities of a given demographic represent a smaller numerical proportion of the overall group, they each capture a larger share of the awareness given to that group. In breaking with a given norm, the attention received is based on perceived difference in relation to that particular norm, which brings us to the next phase of the exercise.

Having shared their five identities, the participants are asked to remove four of them. That is, they are to reduce their multiple identities to just one – the one they find most important in terms of describing who they are. Many participants find this part of the task difficult, and the process is perhaps best described as inflicting violence upon your-*self* because it is too reductionist, the participants complain, to talk about only one category when you just presented your-*selves* through five and possibly more categories – and still the list most likely was not fully exhaustive. The process itself of boiling down the many and different identities (which also tend to vary depending on context, e.g. work-self or 'private'-self, as well as on time, since many participants relate to how they have changed and have not been one coherent self throughout their life course) grants non-minoritised people with the experience of being associated with only one label – even though there was more

to them than, for instance, being a man. Moreover, being reduced to – and in the process made a representative of – one group also comes at the cost of being seen as a knowledgeable, capable and competent individual (Holck and Muhr, 2017), for instance as 'the IT expert' or 'the funny guy'. Majority norms force minority status to be recognised (for diverging from the norm) ahead of, for instance, professional background. Interestingly, following this exercise, some of the workshop participants who initially were of the opinion that it does not matter at work if you are LGBTQ+ or not suddenly expressed a realisation of why identifying as such can be imperative because of being cast as other.

Experiences of intersectionality surfaced particularly in those cases where the workshops had a large presence of minority groups. An example of this is the network in FIU-Ligestilling for minority ethnic women, where the organiser, who herself identifies as a woman with a minority ethnic background in Denmark, summarised her immediate experiences of the workshop as follows:

> The workshop inspired us to better understand some of the underlying mechanisms of discrimination that we, too, as minority ethnic women experience. We, among other things, learnt how to use the norm-critical glasses to become aware of discriminatory language and minority stress – a concept that ethnic minorities have been missing to describe the feeling of not being able to fully be yourself at work.

While the minority stress framework was introduced with reference to how the 'values' of sexual minorities are in a state of conflict with a dominant heteronormative (work) culture (Dispenza et al., 2016), the participants in the network translated this framework by linking it to their own positions not only as ethnic minorities or women, but also as women who are minority ethnic in a Danish workplace where being a person of colour (and your associated religious belief), not to mention wearing a head scarf, makes you stand out because you in one way or another break with the norms.

A concrete example of a situation that can lead to minority stress from not being able to 'fully be yourself at work' is when we in FIU-Ligestilling discuss recruitment and in particular job interviews and how the interviewer risks putting LGBTQ+ applicants in an unequal position if asking about 'the person behind the candidate'. The premise of such a question is a labour market that is better viewed as a 'personality market' (Hanlon, 2016: 15) where the employer is hiring a private as well as a professional self. Asking about family or leisure activities will, in that regard, potentially force a candidate with an LGBTQ+ background to speculate whether to pass or disclose their sexuality and/or gender identity and how a disclosure may affect the situation. That non-LGBTQ+ people don't have to deal with the same concerns became evident during the discussion when one of the participants – after having argued that sexuality is irrelevant in a work context –

suddenly realised that she actually discloses her own sexuality by listing her marital status and the name of her spouse (a man) in her CV.

Norms, in this way, become intertwined with power and privilege, because you can deny that a situation is problematic when it is not experienced as a problem to you personally. The interventions of Sabaah and FIU-Ligestilling are for the same reason not aimed at the individual but at the structural level – referring back to Rodriguez et al. (2016) – with emphasis on the norms of organisational practices. As in Janssens and Zanoni's (2014) study, the purpose is to rework and broaden dominant norms. The point is not that some norms are 'good' or 'bad' per se, but that they are material to people, whose manoeuvring capacity is affected by norms. The question is how some, or the same, people are privileged by certain organisational practices and work norms. Or, paraphrasing Staunæs and Søndergaard (2008b: 39-40), what types of people (subjectivities) specific norms produce, who is excluded in the process and how changes should be made accordingly. It is not the purpose of this paper to provide answers to these questions, but I will address them indirectly in the concluding discussion of possible implications of the suggested norm-critical method for research and practices of diversity management. I will, particularly, do so by addressing the kind of affirmative critique the norm-critical methods performs.

Concluding discussion

I have in this paper theorised norm critique as queer performativity through a cross-reading of recent academic debates about queer- and critical performativity theory. With inspiration from observations of norm-critical workshop facilitation in two case organisations I have moreover illustrated empirically how norm critique, in the move from investigation to a method for intervention, may create a space for what I have called ephemeral moments of intersectionality. I have argued that this state of ephemerality can render visible a multiplicity of emerging and intersecting categories of diversity while simultaneously overriding them, thereby acknowledging difference without fixing it as such. I have, in alignment with Pullen et al. (2016b), suggested that the queering/queerness inherent in the norm critical method performs a rejection of categorical and binary thinking and therefore has a potential for being performative, critically. In furthering the research agenda of a norm-critical way forward (Holck and Muhr, 2017) for studying organisational intersectionality I find it relevant to use the remaining paragraphs for discussing the kind of affirmative critique, which is performed. The discussion should, in spite of the subtitle of this section, not be read as conclusive, but as reflections that can be conducive to future norm-critical endeavours – whether for research or practice or both.

As already proposed, the kind of critique enacted when being norm-critical is one of affirmation, by which I, following the work of Raffnsøe (2017), want to convey a critique that emanates and unfolds from and is situated in the field that it assesses. It can be distinguished (although not separated entirely) from negative criticism (Bargetz, 2015), which is perhaps best explained with reference to Sedgwick's (2003) paranoid reading, whose mode of criticism would be to expose the truths of inequality regimes in organisational settings – as intersectionality studies has been successful at doing. But as Sedgwick (2003: 130) also mentions herself, 'paranoia knows some things well and others poorly', the point being, that there is a need for oscillating between paranoid and what she terms reparative readings. The latter is what I describe as affirmative critique. The norm-critical methods observed in this paper appear to be reparative, since they affirm tendencies already present in the learning spaces created and takes seriously the situation (of the people) that it critiques and whose practices it has as its ambition to intervene. It affirms existing dispositions and asks 'what if' by means of exploring what would happen if, for instance, a job interview were done in a slightly different fashion. Thus, the criteria for performing the critique are produced along the way.

To elaborate further on this affirmative quality to norm critique I would like to stay with the example from the analysis of a job interview situation and how existing practices may put LGBTQ+ candidates in disadvantaged positions relative to candidates that do not identify as LGBTQ+ due to heteronormative expectations and organisational preoccupation with hiring people that live interesting lives outside work. With the publication of this paper I have entered the second year of my collaboration with the two case-organisations. Hence, my role as a researcher is not simply to enter the field, criticise it at an assumed distance, and then to leave it. Rather, I assume responsibility for cultivating the power of the imaginary, for following and narrating different trajectories. By engaging myself in the workshop participants' everyday practices I can care for and nurture critical reflection of normative conditions and support incremental changes by means of broadening the norms. However, the purpose of the critique is *not* for me in my dual role as researcher and workshop facilitator to leave the participants with an assumed solution to how to tackle issues related to disclosure of a candidate's sexual orientation during an interview. Quite the contrary: the idea of the norm-critical method being affirmative is to connote its adventurous approach of meeting the participants where they are to explore, together, how to work with what they are already doing but in a different way.

The performativity of norm critique becomes dispersed and co-produced. In its second year the project in FIU-Ligestilling is, for example, supposed to broaden the norms for organising with the participants to avoid practices that stage disclosure of minorities' sexual orientations and/or gender identities. Since the

process of either coming out or remaining closeted can be seen as relational (e.g. Hoel et al., 2014) the way interviewers phrase questions and arrive at their own conclusions plays a non-trivial role in conditioning whether LGBTQ+ people can be open or not. Disclosure becomes a *re*action, as LGBTQ+ people have little agency in determining if and when they want to come out of (assumed) heterosexuality. However, the message from FIU-Ligestilling would be that practices for, in this case, job interviews can be changed to prevent the situation, e.g. by using gender-neutral words ('spouse' instead of 'wife' or 'husband') and pronouns. As such, the task ahead is – in the words of Fleming and Spicer (2003) – one of 'externalising' intersectionality issues to existing social and, in a work setting, organisational norms in order to undo organisational performativity (Riach et al., 2016) by means of subverting the normativity that conditions (managerial) practice and dominant relations in organisations. Having norms as a common denominator for the intervention has the potential of spreading this undoing to other issues of intersectionality, e.g. whether candidates in female bodies and/or of a non-white skin colour have to answer questions about, for instance, unpaid labour at home that do not apply to candidates in white, male bodies. This remains work-in-progress and new norms for organising are developed along the way. A concluding remark would therefore be that norm-critical reworking of organisational norms is a never-ending endeavour if it is to be queer, performatively, and avoid unreflexive replacement of one set of norms with another.

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Diversity and difference research: a reflection on categories and categorization*

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abstract

In the paper, we reflect on power aspects of categories, and the implications of using pre-established categories in diversity and difference research. With inspiration from intersectionality we discuss how categories and categorization can contribute to continue patterns of inequality and discrimination. We conclude that understanding how categories are used, defined, or constructed can help in understanding power structures and power relations in organizational practices. Such analysis can advance the understanding of how categorization and categories affect the lives of people working in the organizations.

Introduction

This paper is a reflection about categories used in research on diversity and difference in organizations [1]. Diversity and difference research uses social categories (Litvin, 1997) as analytical units or tools to understand and explain issues of inequality, discrimination, diversity and inclusion in the workplace (e.g. Ahmed, 2012), and to understand the behavior of the other (Zander et al., 2010).

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1   For the purpose of this article, we include in the term diversity and difference in organizations research on diversity management as well as cross-cultural management.

Indeed, at the heart of diversity and difference research are social categories of people portrayed as different from a norm.

The categories used in this research tend to be pre-established categories: gender, race/ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, and disability (Litvin, 1997; Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000), age, values, and education, among other variables (Egan and Bendick, 2003; Loden and Rosener, 1991; Milliken and Martins, 1996), nationality and culture (Zander et al., 2010) with the goal of explaining management of diversity and difference and the behaviors of others. Pre-established social categories accordingly form the core of diversity and difference research, and categories are the focus of our article.

Critical diversity scholars address pre-established social categories in their critique of mainstream diversity research claiming that these categories both reflect unequal power and contribute to reproducing it (see Zanoni et al., 2010, for a more extensive review). Pre-established categories can lead to static accounts of diversity in organizations, which ignore the dynamic nature of power and inequality relations (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Consequently, approaching diversity issues through pre-established categories may lead to a risk to 'essentialize difference in framing of workforce diversity and produce flawed empirical, theoretical and policy insights' (*ibid*: 181). Critical scholars claim diversity and difference researchers tend to overlook the issue of power and power structures in their analyses (Primecz et al., 2016; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al., 2010). Power is the focus of intersectional theorists in their analysis of intersecting categories of difference and diversity (e.g. Essers and Benschop, 2009; Adib and Guerrier, 2003). Therefore, we let intersectional theory and research inspire our reflections on categories in diversity and difference research.

The purpose of this paper is to contemplate the power aspects of categories and the possible implications of using pre-established categories in diversity and difference research. We begin with a short overview of intersectionality to set the stage for our further reflections. Thereafter, we continue with a brief reflection on why humans categorize. We continue to ponder over the ways in which power is inherent in the categories used in theories aimed at fighting inequality and discrimination and in managing increasing diversity in organizations. We discuss the use of intersectionality in existing research on diversity in organizations to inspire our discussion. We conclude by reflecting on possible consequences of taking categories for granted in research on discrimination and inequality.

Intersectionality: A means to introduce power in diversity and difference analysis

Intersectional theorists explore power relationships through a lens of mutual constructions of sociocultural categories (Collins and Bilge, 2016; Lykke, 2010). The legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw coined the term *intersectional* as a way of analyzing 'the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences' (Crenshaw, 1991: 1244). Intersectional research 'centers the experiences of subjects whose voices have been ignored' (Nash, 2008: 3).

With a focus on structural inequalities and discrimination, intersectional theorists aim to explain and understand how the interdependence and mutual constitution of social categories on an individual level reflect systems of power, oppression, and privilege on a socio-structural level and an organizational level (Acker, 2006; Bowleg, 2012; Rodriguez et al., 2016). Marfelt (2016) identifies two main intersectional research streams. Loyal to the origins of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), scholars adhering to the first stream study various forms of oppression (e.g., Collins and Bilge, 2016; Holvino, 2010; May, 2015). Recently, however, scholars have begun to see intersectionality as extending beyond oppression (e.g., Diedrich et al., 2011; Kelly and Lubitow, 2014), using it more as an analytical tool for understanding and explaining the interacting and simultaneous effects of different factors (Hancock, 2007; Lykke, 2010; Zander et al., 2010). Nash (2008) suggests broadening the explanatory power of intersectional theory to also focus on ways in which privilege and oppression are co-constituted on the subject level.

One of the main attributes of intersectional theory is its focus on the analysis of social categories on multiple axes rather than dealing with single categories. Many diversity and difference scholars determined to depart from single-dimension and essentializing category analysis turn to intersectional theory, as it promises a more complex view of the multi-dimensional constructions of identities (e.g., Essers and Benschop, 2009; Essers et al., 2010; Holvino, 2010). Not only is the multiplicity of categories emphasized in intersectional analysis, but also their simultaneous and intertwined nature (e.g. Adib and Guerrier, 2003). Intersectionality adds complexity and more fine-grained explanations and understandings to diversity and difference analyses. Intersectional diversity and difference researchers focus also on societal discriminative processes in addition to social categories in their analysis of inequality in organizations (e.g., Carrim and Nkomo, 2016; Johansson and Śliwa, 2016). We bring with us these notions from intersectionality into our further reflections. First, though, we will contemplate on why humans categorize.

The human need to categorize

Categorization is at the heart of human activities and sense making. Categories are mechanisms for organizing. 'A "classification system" is a set of boxes (metaphorical or real) into which things can be put to then do some kind of work – bureaucratic or knowledge production' (Bowker and Star, 2000: 10). Categorization sorts reality into comprehensible categories built on a worldview whereby the attributes of an object tend to correlate (Rosch, 1999; Rosch et al., 1976). A classification system is chosen for a specific purpose (Bowker and Star, 2000) and should ideally demonstrate: 1) consistent, unique classificatory principles, 2) mutually exclusive categories, and 3) a complete system that provides total coverage of the world it describes.

Categorization helps us by simplifying and guiding our actions and behaviors in our everyday lives, routinizing them, providing structure, bringing order to a complex world (Banton, 2011; Vergne and Wry, 2014). It offers a coping strategy and tool for structuring experiences and remaining in control (Jacob, 2004). Categorization is a way of sorting perceptions and actions (Bowker and Star, 2000) – a human activity subject to habitual and organized action. The first time one encounters an object, it may be difficult to categorize it; in time, the process becomes routine, unconscious, embedded in organizational routines, and the categories become taken for granted (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). By studying the process of categorization, one can explain why certain attributes are considered more significant than other attributes.

The functions of categories in organizational diversity and difference research

In organizations categories can provide individuals with guidelines for behavior in certain situations. If employees are sorted into categories according to perceived social identities, the categories serve to facilitate interaction and common understanding within and across groups. Categories aim to make the vast diversity of individual entities we encounter in daily life manageable (Bodenhausen et al., 2012), satisfying a basic human need for cognitive parsimony (Hogg and Abrams, 1988).

Diversity viewed as *business logic* highlights how diversity can be an organizational resource (Risberg and Søderberg, 2008; Williams and O'Reilly, 1998), enhancing creativity and innovation, for example, by presenting a variety of viewpoints (Roberge and van Dick, 2010; Stahl et al., 2010). Categories are here used to identify the parts of a person's identity that provide a resource for the organization.

In the light of internationalization and globalization of business, diversity and difference research – driven by business logic – includes such categories as culture

and nationality (Nishii and Özbilgin, 2007). Many cross-cultural researchers consider a multi-cultural environment as a risk for success-driven organizations, and potential problems are associated with miscommunication and conflict arising from cultural differences (e.g., Hofstede, 2001; 1980). This 'problem-focused view' of cultural diversity (see Stevens et al., 2008) leads researchers to culture- and nationality-based categorization, in their attempt to solve problems stemming from cultural or national differences. Categorization can therefore be seen as a tool to 'smooth out' cross-cultural business encounters.

Diversity seen as a moral and *social-justice* issue builds on the assumption that individuals of certain categories are disadvantaged in comparison to others. Social-justice logic has its origin in anti-discrimination legislation aimed at protecting a group of people who are discriminated against in workplaces or in society at large (see European Union, 2000; ILO, 1958, and various national legislations). Categories are used to identify discriminated minority groups, to strengthen their position in organizations and society, and to combat the discrimination they face – often the same categories found in national anti-discrimination laws, EU directives, and the UN Declaration for Human Rights.

A growing body of critical diversity management studies sets out to study – hidden or not – dimensions of power embedded in diversity management practices (Marfelt and Muhr, 2016). Many critical diversity scholars point out that if hierarchy, privilege, and discrimination, among other factors, are left unattended, systemic oppression will continue (e.g., Oswick and Noon, 2014; Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010). Categories are here used to criticize perpetuation of inequality regimes.

In our focal theories, categorization serves to fulfill theoretical and analytical objectives. In business-logic diversity and difference theories categorization serves a more normative objective: how to help organizations manage situations and events involving people representing differing social categories. Social-justice and critical driven diversity research uses categories as a tool to identify groups targeted for systemic inequality or discrimination, pointing to power aspects within organizations.

In business-logic diversity and difference theories, it may seem that categories are relatively neutral concepts, the purpose of which is to facilitate the daily lives of humans in the workplace and in society. However, following the insights from intersectional research and social-justice driven diversity and difference research, it becomes clear that is not the case. Therefore, we continue with a critical discussion of political and power aspects embedded in categories.

Implicit assumptions embedded in categories

Categorization can be a process of power demonstration. Bowker and Star (2000) point to epistemological, political, and ethical aspects in processes of building classification systems. Categories are subjective, as the location of the individual perceiving them influences the perception of opposition and dissimilarity (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Ahonen and Tienari (2015) argue that although diversity management discourse emphasizes the goal of equality and social justice, thereby claiming neutrality of judgment, the differences in focus are selective (see also Swan, 2010). Those determining the categories have the power to define the norm (what is counted as a difference, in relation to what?). They hold the power to decide what attributes of difference should be categorized (see also Marfelt and Muhr, 2016). The significance given to attributes is influenced by what the individual creating the category perceives to be an important distinction. The attributed distinction is strongly influenced by the perception of difference and a belief that the difference is noteworthy (Harrison and Klein, 2007).

To categorize diversity and create diversity knowledge is to 'identify and enable or set in motion the diverse subject, to make the diverse subject a visible, legitimate, subject' (Ahonen and Tienari, 2015: 281). Diversity entails elements of construction and agency. The correlational structures of objects are subject to the individual perceiving the attributes which in turn depends on the individual's location, including cultural background and specific capabilities of perception. Ahonen and Tienari (2015) add underlying political agenda to the list, pointing to underlying norm structures by which an organization's performance and competitive advantage guide the understanding and classification of diversity (see also Ahmed, 2012). This sustains the business-based view that diversity contributes to organizational performance. Diversity management categories, whether business- or social-justice based, are infused with constructions dependent on the location of the individual categorizer.

If certain characteristics are assumed to correlate with an attribute, giving it significance may lead to dubious or stereotypical conclusions about individuals who are sorted into a certain category. Work attitude may be associated with ethnicity, for example, if a specific ethnic group is perceived as hardworking. If these correlations are considered fixed, naturalized essences of a group, even though subjective and dependent on individual perceptions, they serve as grounds for prejudices and stereotypes.

Power aspects of chosen categories in diversity and difference studies rarely receive attention (for some exceptions, see e.g. Ahonen et al., 2014; Ahonen and Tienari, 2015, Primecz et al., 2016) and there is an inadequate theorizing of power in

diversity management research (Zanoni et al., 2010). A reason could be the most commonly used social categories in diversity research – gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and religion – are taken for granted, used without deliberations.

Power relations ingrained in category constructions in diversity and difference research

Notions of inferior or superior, privileged or non-privileged, powerful or powerless seem to be ingrained in most social-identity categories used in organizations – if not in society at large. Social categories occur when we differentiate with regard to gender, skin color, race, and class, in reference to social, economic, or power status. Each category covers a certain group of individuals; the category 'male' reflects male attributes that differ from female attributes. Yet, the dimension is often collapsed within a certain category. A reading of gender in organization studies reveals that whereas one talks about the dimension of gender, in practice only the category of women is referred to. For example, an extensive body of research investigates the disadvantages female employees experience in male-dominated organizations (for a review, see Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011). In line with the purpose of categorizing to combat discrimination, one category moves to center stage as the group of individuals associated with it is seen to be disadvantaged – a situation to be overcome. The category is therefore legitimized by the conditions its members supposedly experience. Female employees are seen to suffer from obstacles in career advancement and lower pay than men; great importance is therefore accorded the category of women, in order to combat organizational inequalities. But, such single focus on women assumes that women need to change their unprivileged, inferior position, not that the unequal structures need to change. A power relationship is ingrained in the categories of woman and man.

Acker (2006: 444) observed how race 'refers to socially defined differences based on physical characteristics, culture, and historical domination and oppression, justified by entrenched beliefs'. Such understanding can be traced back to Carl von Linné's (1735) taxonomies of biologically defined human races. His taxonomy came to serve as a foundation for eugenics (Lindquist, 1996; Lindquist and Olsson, 1991) and as basis for colonial power oppression. Eugenics builds on assumptions that humanity can be divided in more or less distinct races that differ in physical and mental aspects. The differences are assumed to originate from inherited characteristics transferred from generation to generation and on the basis of these differences a value hierarchy is constructed (Lundmark, 2007). Linné's taxonomy divides *Homo sapiens* into four categories based on geographical location and skin

color: *Africanus Niger*, *Americanus Rubescens*, *Asiaticus Fuscus*, and *Europeaus Albus* (Broberg, 1975). He described, for example, Africans as phlegmatic, black, slow, relaxed, and negligent; and Europeans as pale, muscular, fast, smart, and inventive. Inequalities and power structures were (re)produced in the construction of race categories as they point to inferiority and superiority based on human features (e.g. skull form) and correlated with intellect and behavior. Historical uses of human categories have clear power structures built into the categories and the categorization processes as it attributes superiority and greater intelligence to some races over others. The South African apartheid, by which people were classified in order to be separated, serves as a prime example of race oppression at work. In a more modern context, Vesterberg's (2013) study of immigrants points to how members of the category 'Somali' are constructed as being as inferior by being difficult to integrate into the Swedish society and labor market. Using race categories uncritically increases the risk of perpetuating power, inequality, and discrimination.

Structured representations of national cultures (e.g. House et al., 2004; Hofstede, 2001) are infused with binary oppositions of Western and non-Western cultures. Said (1978) describes how Western descriptions of the East are tied to Western imperialist interests, whereby descriptions of the East gain meaning through their reference to the West. Typical binary oppositions such as good-evil, honest-dishonest, civilized-primitive, controlled-aggressive accentuate the difference and hierarchical opposition (*ibid*.). Positive terms are used to describe the norm (Western man) and negative terms to describe the Other. European cultures are seen as more positive than African cultures and North American as more positive than Asian cultures. Relationships and comparisons are made with Western terms of reference (Zanoni et al., 2010), and dualisms or binary oppositions are introduced to make cultural relations manageable (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000).

Discourses on cultural diversity are imbued with power relationships, as categories are constructed in relation to Western norms, yet assumed to be neutral. Ahonen et al. (2014) argue that diversity and its categories must be understood in relation to those who conceptualize it, which reflects the contextual conditions in which diversity and its categories are constituted. The classification, calculation, inclusion, and exclusion of categories of cultural diversity are rooted more in context than in the taxonomical tool. What Ahonen and Tienari (2015) call ethico-politics is constantly involved in categorization, because context is influenced through value statements and political-ethical statements made in that context (*ibid*; Willmott, 2014).

These examples show how categories are constructed with reference to a value system wherein the existence of a category is given sense through norms (Jenkins,

2000) and notions of normalcy. The category 'Somali immigrants' makes sense in relation to their labor market status; the category 'female employees' is given significance with respect to their relative positioning in the organization. Dominating norms of equality and a work ethic consequently influence the framing of categories, and minority groups are distinguished in relation to that norm. Categorization serves to frame these groups. As Zanoni and Janssens (2004) demonstrate, human resource managers understand diversity under the umbrella of grand discourses such as compliance and work ethic. These discourses influence the process of categorization and reaffirm existing management practices and inequalities (see also Zanoni and Janssens, 2015). Power relations and notions of deviation from established norms accompany the categorization of people in organizations.

Intersectional diversity and difference research

If intersectional theory explores power in the intersection of social categories, is intersectionality the answer to the above critique? Could a more conscious categorization process be a way to focus on unequal power relations and norms reflecting the interests of the privileged? Below we bring forward what intersectionality has brought to diversity and difference research in terms of categories and power issues.

Much intersectional diversity and difference research is conceptual and theoretical, suggesting how intersectionality could contribute to the understanding of diversity and difference in organizations. Many, for example, argue for multiple rather than single category research (Özbilgin et al., 2011) or to extend the classic intersecting categories (Holvino, 2010; Metcalf and Woodhams, 2012; Prasad, 2012; Strolovitch, 2012). The number of empirical diversity and difference studies using intersectional analysis is growing. Contributions to earlier diversity and difference research demonstrate that these studies bring in macro contextual factors in the analysis as well as study processes of inequality. These studies also point to the fluidity of intersecting axes and point to power processes.

Carrim and Nkomo (2016) in their study of South African Indian female managers emphasize how the women's managerial identity is formed by personal and social identities (categories) and institutionalized systems and processes (apartheid and cultural norms). Also, Johansson and Śliwa (2016) point out that the intersection of language and social identity categories are important to understand processes of social and organizational differentiation. Atewologun et al.'s (2016) study shows how intersecting categories are fluid as individuals may have advantaged or disadvantaged social identities at the same time. The advantaged positions shift

according to intersecting categories. For example, a male non-white senior manager's position may be advantaged in relation to a subordinate but disadvantages in relation to a white senior manager. Power positions are thus not stable but fluid according to axing social categories. Adding a category beyond the classic axes of social categories – hierarchical lines – Boogaard and Roggeband (2010) use intersectionality to show how organizational structures and individual agency can construct inequality in organizations. In a study of Muslim immigrant entrepreneurial business women, using intersectionality as an analytical tool, Essers et al. (2010) could point to tensions encountered by respondents because of the intertwining of gender and ethnicity.

Intersectionality makes it possible to untangle and change the differential impact of everyday practices in organizations, and identify and link internal organizational processes and structures of oppression and power with external societal processes and structures (Holvino, 2010). It offers 'simultaneous processes of identity, institutional and social practice, brings more complete and accurate analyses and better organization and policy change applications' (*ibid*: 266). Thus, intersectionality used in diversity and difference studies offers more thorough analyses of inequality and oppression, potentially leading to better-grounded organizational and policy changes.

What intersectional analyses bring to diversity and difference studies are thus more dynamic views of categories, adding new intersections and linking the organizational context to the societal context – though not all studies do all these things. Yet, most of the studies build on pre-defined categories.

Discussion

Our reflections point to how social identity categories are accompanied by power and relationships of inequality and have universalist and essentialist tendencies (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Despite the aim of intersectional theorists to move beyond attention to single categories and to proclaim the simultaneity and interdependence of categories, the core argument is built on stable and durable categories (McCall, 2005). Thus, using multiple categories does not necessarily eliminate the risk of perpetuating power relations ingrained in the categories. Simply categorizing someone as a woman or non-white person perpetuates inequality regimes. Categories of gender and race affect assumptions about skills, responsibility, behaviors, and even appropriate salaries (Acker, 2006). The woman category is accompanied by expectations of how the person will behave and perform on the job, and how she should be remunerated. Labeling someone a refugee migrant from a certain region includes assumptions about literacy,

education, and competences. Prasad (2012) claims that simply by using fixed categories, scholars risk reifying and perhaps unintentionally legitimating public assumptions about pre-defined categories, especially binary categories. Categories also shape the behaviors of those associating certain assumptions with certain categories. As Acker (2006: 451) notes 'supervisors probably shape their behavior with subordinates in terms of race and gender in many other work situations, influencing in subtle ways the existing patters of inequality'.

So, many critical diversity management scholars argued there is little value in using pre-established categories in diversity studies (Marfelt and Muhr, 2016). Instead Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) propose the use of emergent categories that are locally and empirically identified and defined according to their role in generating power, privilege, advantage, disadvantage, discrimination, and inequality. This would generate emic knowledge about diversity, acknowledging the dynamics of power, advantage, and privilege alongside disadvantage, inequality, and discrimination, they claim. The starting point for emic categories is the analysis of power relations, including the historical, institutional, and socio-economic settings.

Primecz et al. (2016), on the other hand, call for caution with emergent categories as the categorization process is not unbiased. They point to how emerging categories are unpolitical, not questioning tensions between advantaged and disadvantaged positions. In addition, new categories of diversity and difference are most likely linked to those holding power positions, just as Marfelt and Muhr (2016) conclude.

Do we have a double-bind dilemma here? If one does not use pre-established categories in diversity, difference and intersectionality research, one risks overlooking structural discrimination; yet, by uncritically adopting pre-produced categories, one risks the perpetuation of racist or sexist notions and inequality regimes (Zanoni and Janssens, 2004). There is probably no clear answer but we could conclude that diversity and difference research, using single or multiple categories, could benefit from an approach that attends to the temporal and geographical contextuality of relationships of power, privilege, inequality, and disadvantage (Metcalfe and Woodhams, 2012) inspired by intersectionality. To this approach, one should also add a caution regarding what power and inequality aspects come with the pre-established or emergent categories.

Conclusion

Our aim with this paper has been to reflect critically on the use of categories in traditional and intersectional diversity and difference research. Although categorizing is inevitable in handling complexity, and although it helps to fight inequality and discrimination, it can also contribute to continuing patterns of inequality and discrimination.

Categories should not be taken for granted and should be used with caution. One way forward could be to study the construction of categories – what Eriksson-Zetterquist and Styhre (2007) call the organizing of diversity practices – as the construction process entails power and power positions (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). Understanding how categories are used, defined, or constructed can help in understanding the power structures and power relations in an organization in relation to other processes and practices, including recruitment, advancement, salary, remuneration, promotion, and training. Such analysis could help us understand how categorization and categories – accompanied by aspects of power and inequality through assumptions – affect the lives of people working in organizations. A question remains though – to paraphrase Linstead and Brewis (2004) – how can we write about diversity and difference and acknowledge the importance of diversity and difference without reproducing power relations?

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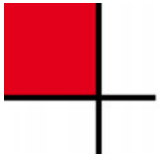
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Grindr culture: Intersectional and socio-sexual

Andrew DJ Shield

abstract

This research note is based on ethnographic work in the greater Copenhagen area on the socio-sexual networking app Grindr and on interviews with twelve recent immigrants who use this platform. As an online space primarily for gay men, Grindr is a unique subculture in which to conduct research about intersections of sexuality with other socio-cultural categories such as race and migration background, but also gender and ability. I find that user experiences with exclusion and discrimination relate to Grindr's interface, such as its drop-down menus, to the discourses circulated by Grindr users in profile texts, and to user-to-user interactions in private messages.

Introduction

The concept of intersectionality – as it arose from black feminist critique – emphasizes that discrimination on multiple axes (e.g. race and sex) can be synergistic: an individual does not merely experience the additive aspects of discriminations (e.g. racism plus sexism) but can feel a larger weight as these systems of power operate in various contexts (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality arose from critiques of patriarchy in African-American movements and of white supremacy in feminist movements. Hence, the concept has always acknowledged discrimination within repressed groups. Drawing from these critiques, this research note explores intersectionality within a space for primarily gay men: the online culture of Grindr, a networking app available exclusively on smartphones since its inception in 2009. In this note, I present empirical data from on-going research about how immigrants use and experience Grindr in the greater Copenhagen area.

Grindr facilitates communication between strangers in close proximity via public profiles and private chats and is an extension of the 'gay male digital culture' cultivated in chat rooms and on websites since the 1990s (Mowlabocus, 2010: 4) There are no algorithms to match users: instead, Grindr participants initiate contact with (or reject) each other based on one profile photo, about 50 words of text, some drop-down menus, and private chats. By centring on the user photo, Grindr's interface hyper-valuates visual self-presentations, which shapes an individual's experiences on the platform, especially when the user's body provides visible cues about a racial or cultural minority position, gender non-conformity, or disability.

In *LGBTQs: Media and culture in Europe* (Dhoest et al., 2017), my contributing chapter showed that especially those who are 'new in town' use Grindr to find not only sexual partners, but also friends, local information, housing, and even employment (Shield, 2017b). Yet, Grindr can also be a space where immigrants and people of colour experience racism and xenophobia (Shield, 2018). This analysis extends my work on race and migration status to look at other intersections, namely with gender and body norms. Moreover, this piece highlights the potential and novelty of conducting ethnographic research about intersectionality via online social media.

'Grindr culture', 'socio-sexual networking', and intersectionality

In 2010, scholar Sharif Mowlabocus published *Gaydar culture: Gay men, technology and embodiment in the digital age*, in which he explored gay male digital culture in terms of both the technological affordances of gay websites like Gaydar.uk (with real-time chatting and photo-swapping) and the ways users navigated these online spaces (i.e. modes of self-presentation and communication), often with the end-goal of physical interaction. In his final chapter, Mowlabocus looked ahead to a new development in gay men's online cruising: mobile-phone platforms. He introduced the reader to Grindr, a networking app that was only available on phones with geo-location technologies (GPS) and data/WiFi access (Mowlabocus, 2010). Little did Mowlabocus know that by 2014, Grindr would claim 'nearly 10 million users in over 192 countries' of whom over two million were 'daily active users' (Grindr, 2014); by 2017, Grindr reported that its three million daily active users averaged about an hour a day on the platform (Grindr, 2017).

I use the term 'Grindr culture' to build on Mowlabocus' analysis of gay men's digital culture, taking into consideration two major developments since 2010: the first is technological, namely the development and proliferation of smart mobile technologies; the second is social, and points to the popularization (or even

omnipresence) of social networking platforms. These developments contribute to the unique ways users navigate the social codes, patterns and behaviours – i.e. the communicative 'culture' (Deuze, 2006; van Dijk, 2013) – of apps like Grindr.

Notwithstanding these technological and social developments since 2010, there are also continuities between 'Grindr culture' and the web-based gay cultures that developed in the mid-1990s. For example, there is value attached to the identifiable profile picture or 'face pic', which Mowlabocus noted was synonymous with authenticity, openness about one's sexuality, and even investment in the (imagined) community (Mowlabocus, 2010). Another continuity stretches further back to the classified ads that gay men and lesbians printed in periodicals in the 1960s-1980s: Grindr profiles communicate not only about sex and dating, but also about friendship, logistical support with housing and employment, and local information (Shield, 2017a). The diversity of desires expressed by those with (somewhat) shared sexual interests represents a unique networking culture, best described as 'socio-sexual'.

'Socio-sexual networking' here refers to the process of interpersonal communication among those open to forming erotic, platonic, and practical connections, sometimes simultaneously. While in anthropology and zoology, 'socio-sexual' refers to sexual activity outside of a committed relationship, I use it to emphasize the sociable and socio-cultural aspects of sexual cultures. Since its launch, Grindr has claimed in its promontional materials to be a 'social network', and thus has distanced itself from established hook-up (sex) websites, even as it attracted members from these sites. Grindr's interface is not explicitly sexual: Grindr vets all profile photos, prohibiting those showing underwear or less; and it even censors profile texts, prohibiting certain sex-related keywords. The 'looking for' drop-down menu only includes the suggestive 'right now', alongside friendship, dating, networking, chat, and relationship, but most users understand this as a euphemism for sex. Scholarly attention to Grindr and related platforms – which often focuses on public health concerns like HIV/AIDS transmission – tend to emphasize only this sexual component of gay networking (e.g. Grov et al., 2014). In contrast, this piece treats Grindr users' semi-public profiles and private exchanges as valuable sites for understanding not only sexuality, but also social cultures of a primarily gay space.

Lisa Nakamura has been a leading scholar in applying Crenshaw's theories of intersectionality to online interfaces and subcultures. Her early critique of racial drop-down menus on online profiles (Nakamura, 2002) remains relevant to many socio-sexual networking platforms today, including Grindr. Nakamura has also analysed how negative racial and sexual stereotypes as well as racist and sexist discourses have saturated online gaming sub-cultures (Nakamura, 2011; 2014),

both via users' communications and through the limited, racialized and sexualised avatars available on platforms. Nakamura's work inspired subsequent research on race in gay men's digital spaces, including Andil Gosine's auto-ethnographic reflections on identity tourism in gay chat rooms (2007) and Shaka McGlotten's work on 'racial injury, including ordinary microaggressions as well as overt structural forms of racism' in gay male digital cultures (2013: 66). I expand on the work of Nakamura, Gosine, and McGlotten by applying theories of online intersectionality to a Nordic context – where race is often discussed in tandem with immigration (Eide and Nikunen, 2010) – and with sensitivity to transgender and other marginalized Grindr users.

Methods

My on-going online fieldwork engages with Annette Markham's conceptions of social media ethnography, which adapts traditional concepts from anthropology – the field, the collection of field notes, researcher participation and self-reflection – to an online context (Markham, 2013). I engaged in participant observation within the semi-bounded field of Grindr in the greater Copenhagen area by reading and cataloguing profiles, and by communicating with the users on the platform. Grindr displays only the closest users in one's immediate vicinity, ranked by distance. In order to diversify the profiles included in my field notes, I gathered profiles from various locations in the greater Copenhagen area, including Malmö (Sweden), a city that is not traditionally defined within the greater Copenhagen area but which has many residents who commute to Copenhagen for work, as well as for participation in Copenhagen's gay and queer subcultures.

Empirical material also comes from twelve semi-structured interviews with recent immigrants to the greater Copenhagen area, most of whom responded to my researcher profile on Grindr in which I identified myself as a gay PhD student from New York City looking to speak to those who were new in town about their experiences on Grindr. All interviewees used Grindr after moving to Scandinavia, and many had used Grindr in their countries of origin, including countries where homosexuality is illegal (Shield, 2017b).

Interviewees arrived in the greater Copenhagen area after 2010; their countries of origin were China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, another Arab country, and another unspecified Asian country.[1] Names have been changed for confidentiality concerns. Interviewees were in their 20s-40s, and had residence permits based on

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[1] The first one is a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country; the interviewees asked that I did not specify more.

employment, university affiliation, asylum, family reunification, or green cards, though legal residence was not a requirement to participate in the research. About half of the interviews were conducted in a café in Copenhagen, the other half via Skype, and one at an interviewee's private residence due to privacy concerns. I asked about uses of and experiences on Grindr in Scandinavia, with specific attention to offline social networks and experiences with race-based discrimination.

My insider status as a gay-identified, 32-year-old, non-European immigrant and Grindr user facilitated open dialogue with my interviewees. To the Arabic speakers, I ingratiated myself with some Arabic, a language that I studied for five years in the United States. Despite not looking stereotypically Scandinavian, I have certain physical features (e.g. green eyes) and an Anglophone name, which mean that I am categorised as white more readily than my interviewees. Thus I also had an outsider status with regard to some conversations about experiences with racism and xenophobia, and also with regard to my emigration from a wealthy Western country. I am aware that ethnographic work within a field to which one is closely connected, especially sex-related, can result in a researcher sympathising too closely with one's informants (Markham, 2013; Sundén, 2012); yet, I sought to remain critical in my analyses of the transcribed interviews.

I conduct fieldwork with respect to many of the suggestions outlined in the Association of Internet Research's 'Ethical Decision Making' guidelines (Markham and Buchanan, 2015); for example, although the data from Grindr is freely available to all with a smartphone, I acknowledge that most Grindr users expect discretion and privacy, and thus I avoid personally identifiable information. Direct quotations from profile texts cannot be readily linked to individual profiles, since Grindr texts are not searchable on web-based engines like Google. In this piece, I also quote four Grindr users whom I chatted with informally via private message; in all cases, I received permission to quote the users.

Results

Grindr culture: Intersections with race

Grindr has since 2009 brought attention to race as a central feature of the online profile by encouraging users to identify with one of nine labels from the 'ethnicity' drop-down menu: Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern, Mixed, Native American, White, South Asian, and Other. Just over half of all Grindr users in Copenhagen select from this menu (of whom about 85% choose white, and about 15% choose

something other than white[2]). Those who pay for Grindr Xtra can even filter their possible matches according to this drop-down menu.

Şenol, who is originally from Turkey, felt that the 'ethnicity' menu contributes to racist discourses on Grindr, such as profile texts that announce 'Sorry, no Asians'. Racial-sexual exclusions are central to many of the experiences of people of colour on Grindr; as Şenol expanded, 'Racism in the gay community is quite visible, and people get away with it because they say it's a preference, which I disagree'. Caleb, who is originally from China, said he confronts Grindr users who make anti-Asian statements on their profiles: 'I want people to think about it,' he began. He felt that many white Scandinavians hold racial-sexual preferences, 'Even though some don't write it on their profiles'.

On the other hand, racial-sexual fetishes (e.g. 'I'm into Asians') can also be problematic. Yusuf, who identifies as black, referred to users' exotification of his blackness as 'sugar-coated racism'. He mentioned discomfort with users who 'address me as a piece of chocolate,' or who 'talk to me in plural, like "Black guys are so hot"'.

Grindr users of colour and/or with immigration background also receive periodic insults directed at their race, nationality, or religion. To give an extreme example, one Arab interviewee received a message from a white Scandinavian who wrote, 'F*ck [your Arab country], f*ck Islam, and f*ck you'. Interviewees tended to downplay the culprits of these messages as bad apples. But in the context of Europe's turbulent political discourses about immigration, statements like these can be seen as a form of 'entitlement racism,' whereby aggressors justify their hate speech as merely 'speaking one's mind' (Essed, 2013; see also Essed and Muhr, this issue).

Recent research shows that Scandinavian-born people of colour frequently receive questions about their origins, which suggests that many white Scandinavians still conflate Scandinavian nationality and culture with whiteness, and vice versa (Mulinari, 2017). On Grindr, I engaged in an informal chat with a Dane with Iraqi background, who told me about an incident on Grindr when a white Dane had told him to piss off to 'your country'. Thus even Danish-born people of colour experience xenophobia through racism and Islamophobia.

Intersections with gender

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[2]   This statistic is based on over 5000 pieces of data (though not 5000 unique profiles) collected at eight intervals over five days in December 2016 and March 2017 of profiles logged into Copenhagen city center and its immediate surroundings.

Christina, who identifies as a transgender woman and who is originally from Asia, said that she commonly experiences on Grindr that users assume that she is a sex worker.[3] Christina believed that Danes mistook her for a sex worker because they perceived her to be from Thailand or Cambodia, two countries that she felt Danes associated with sex tourism or prostitution. Yet although Christina attributed Grindr users' stereotypes about her foremost to her race/migration status, one cannot untie her negative experiences on Grindr from sexism and transphobia. Christina's experiences suggests that Grindr users hold a constellation of stereotypes about transgender women, Asian immigrants, and sexual-economic opportunism.

As a platform, Grindr remains ambivalent about the presence of transgender people. Grindr's 2017 promotional materials still described the app as an 'all-male mobile social network' that used location technology to 'connect men with other men' in their area, and all of the models in the promotional materials presented as male (Grindr, 2017).[4] But transgender men also face prejudice and exclusion on the app, as trans activist Niels Jansen shared during a Copenhagen Pride panel:

> I've had profiles on all of the apps: Grindr, Scruff, Hornet... and [what I learned is that] nobody will write to you [if you're a trans man]... I figured, "Okay, maybe it's my profile picture... Maybe I need to write a great profile text, so that people can see that I'm funny and smart... Maybe I need to lose weight.... Maybe I'm too old"... [But] in my experience, you can't be too diferent. (Grindr and Sex Culture, 2017: n.p.)

As Jansen felt that most socio-sexual app users rejected conversation with him, he eventually stopped using these platforms altogether. But he was idealistic that Grindr users might learn to examine their preconceived notions about trans men, and to consider why they had been 'conditioned to think of a man [only] in certain terms' (*ibid*).

Despite Grindr's apparent obliviousness to trans women in its promotional materials through 2017, Grindr took one step to challenge users' perceptions of gender within Grindr culture by adding the 'Trans' drop-down-menu option in 2013. In the greater Copenhagen area, mostly transgender women utilize this menu option, as well as some trans men and some cisgender men who are interested in meeting trans people. Yet the 'Trans' drop-down option is located in an awkward location within Grindr's 'Tribe' menu, which includes arbitrary

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3   Although self-promoted sex work is legal in Denmark, Grindr will delete profiles that make reference to transactional sex, including massages.

4   During the final edits of this note (December 2017), Grindr added drop-down menus for diverse gender identities and pronouns; future research could examine how these menus changed transgender and non-binary users' experiences on the platform.

identifications like 'Twink' (often for young, smooth men), 'Jock,' or 'Leather'. Including 'Trans' in this list gives the impression that trans identities are fleeting, or that trans people are fetishes. Nevertheless, this trivial menu heightens awareness about sex/gender diversity within Grindr culture, by creating an official way for trans-identified people to come out.

Sexist prejudice affects not only transgender Grindr users, but also cisgender male users who are perceived to be feminine. On Grindr in Copenhagen, many gay men self-describe as masculine and/or communicate a preference for masculine men: 'Only into masculine and muscular,' wrote one user; 'I like guys! Not "girls"! Be masculine!' proclaimed another; 'only looking for masculine tops' a third user wrote, reiterating later that he was 'turned on by masculinity'. Newcomers also contribute to these discourses: a Middle Eastern immigrant in Malmö declared 'no fat n femininboys plz' in his profile.

These statements treat masculinity as natural or essential, and not as a social construction. As a scholarly field, masculinity studies (e.g. Connell, 1992; Kimmel et al., 2000) arose out of queer insights into gender as performative and intersectional (Butler, 1990). So it is somewhat ironic that this rejection of men's femininity remains so visible in a queer environment. Perceptions and definitions of femininity can also relate to race, as David Eng (2001) theorized regarding the 'racial castration' of Asian men in (homo)sexual cultures.

Intersections with body norms

'It's not just racism flourishing on Grindr', a white Danish user wrote me one afternoon. 'There is also audism and ableism'. I received this message from Carl on my researcher profile in 2017 after I had changed my headline to 'race and racism' in order to recruit interviewees to speak specifically about the topic. Chatting informally on the platform, Carl wrote that some guys stopped writing to him after they realized he was deaf, but that he 'didn't really care'. He clarified that although he was 'very open' about being deaf – it was written on his profile, and he reiterates it in private messages – some of his friends 'avoid using the words Deaf or Sign Language in their profiles' out of fear of being excluded.

Assumptions about abilities and healthy bodies circulate on the platform. One crosses profiles that proclaim brusquely 'no fats', yet others imply this exclusion when they request men who are 'in shape' or 'fit'. The Grindr interface encourages users to identify with a 'body type', and to consider the difference between a 'toned' and a 'muscular' body, between a 'stocky' and a 'large' body, or what an 'average' body looks like. Height and weight drop-down menus present a range that

excludes some people with pituitary or genetic irregularities. Promotional materials focus on men with low body fat.

Grindr brought attention to HIV status first in 2013, when the new 'Tribe' drop-down menu included an option for 'Poz' (or HIV-positive) people; then in 2016, Grindr added drop-down-menus for 'HIV status' and 'last tested date'. Highlighting HIV status could be justified as a public health concern, but one could also argue that it stigmatizes HIV-positive users on Grindr (who are already targets of aggressive messages, like the profile of one Copenhagen-based user who proclaimed 'No infected b*tches please'). Yet Grindr also counteracts some of this stigma of infection by providing HIV-positive people with two options – 'positive' and 'positive, undetectable' – alongside links to definitions of 'undetectable' and information about the low probability of HIV transmission for many people living with the virus.

Intersectional anti-discrimination

Users also challenge or reject discrimination, often on intersectional lines, in the greater Copenhagen area's Grindr culture. One white Dane – who I learned via private message was a university student in sociology – wrote in his profile text: 'Ageism, fat shaming, racism and discrimination against feminine boys = go away!' (Shield, 2017b: 256). Interestingly, he was not an immediate target for any of these forms of discrimination (as he self-described through drop-down menus as a 27-year-old 'white' 'toned' 'jock'). But he was aware that various forms of discrimination permeated on Grindr and elsewhere in Denmark, and thus he sought to bring attention to the subculture's exclusionary discourses about age, body type, race, and gender.

After this conversation, I came across the profile of another white Dane in his mid-20s whose profile headline read: 'Relaxed, funny, smart. Feminism, anti-racism, love'. I sent a private message to him, and after an initial compliment on his profile text, asked: 'Is it safe to bet that you are a student of sociology or cultural studies?' 'Not at all', he responded. 'I'm a tour guide ☺'. I told him that I had assumed it was only people with personal, academic, or work-related connections to racism and xenophobia who would challenge these systems of power on Grindr; he replied that he was evidence that these discourses circulated also in other Danish circles. He hoped his text would have a ripple effect on Grindr, as he ruminated, 'I do hope I'm setting an example' for others to self-reflect on their assumptions about race or gender. Several months later, I spotted his profile again, this time with the

message 'Internalized homophobia is not hot. Neither is racism. Feminism [is] a plus'[5].

Concluding comments

The empirical data are examples of how individual experiences within a mostly gay subculture vary tremendously based on race, migration background, sex, gender, ability, size, and HIV status, among other factors. Through interviews and informal chats, I collected numerous examples of Grindr users who felt that their ability to connect with other users – whether for sex or other ends – was limited because of their position as a minority within the Grindr culture of the greater Copenhagen area.

The empirical data were collected from 2015-2017, yet should not be considered as static: discourses on Grindr change over time. In 2015, for example, I noted that one white Dane wanted to meet a 'sane, masculine, *white*' man in his 20s-30s; by 2016, he had amended his announcement, and sought 'sane, masculine, *western*' man; and by 2017, he had removed any reference to race/ethnicity altogether[6]. The self-editing is not proof that the user broadened his search criteria, but it does suggest that he changed his profile in relation to conversations he had about race or after observing anti-discrimination discourses on other Grindr users' profiles. His continued references to sanity and masculinity echo other dominant discourses on Grindr, but these too could change with time.

The data detailed in this research note looks at the greater Copenhagen area, but does not specify the experiences of users at precise locations within this metropolitan area. Mowlabocus' early research on Grindr pointed to its radical potential for taking cruising back to the streets, as he wrote that Grindr could 'reintegrate gay men back into public space' (2010: 195). Yet, Grindr's geo-locative technology also reinforces geographic boundaries, hindering communication across borders, be they international, rural/urban, or even intra-urban. Users based in or with access to high-congestion areas will see more variation in the online culture than users with limited mobility who are based in quiet areas. When web-based digital cruising predominated (i.e. circa mid-1990s-2010 or so), users' physical locations did not limit their ability to view profiles in distant areas. A user in rural Jutland could change his location manually to Copenhagen to cruise

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5   Newcomers can also challenge discrimination on Grindr; one Native-American-identified tourist in December 2016 wrote that he sought 'body positive, inclusive, non racist, HIV indifferent, equality-embracing, non judgemental, good people.'

6   Emphasis added.

Denmark's capital virtually; even a user in Poland could switch his location to Copenhagen in anticipation of upcoming travel or migration (Boston, 2015). However, geo-locative smartphone apps can reproduce urban divisions in a virtual space; these divisions can relate to geography, socio-economic class, and/or racial and migrant communities. Future research could thus consider how a geo-locative, mobile device might exacerbate not only a user's geographical position, but also the user's socio-economic position.

Within Grindr culture, a user's (often) gay or queer identity intersects with a variety of other identities, which influences the user experience. Identities and differences are reinforced through the platform's interface, such as through drop-down menus, and through the circulation of user discourses that reveal personal prejudices. Yet this research also highlights that users define and reject discrimination within Grindr culture, undermining hierarchies and promoting diversity. As a study of the dynamics of social media, this research considers the ever-developing technological affordances of online platforms, the unique subcultures created by users of these platforms, and the feedback loops connecting the technological and the social aspects of the platform, especially with regard to their reification or challenging of various systems of power.

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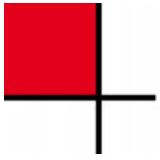
White fantasy, white betrayals: On neoliberal 'feminism' in the US presidential election process*

Eda Ulus

Opening, questioning: Feminism for whom?

In this note for *ephemera*, I discuss neoliberal, white feminism – as recently embodied in declarations of Hilary Clinton's anticipated US Presidential election as feminist glory, as triumph for women. Further, guided by the voices and analyses of people of colour (e.g., Alexander, 2012; Fernández, 2016), I call out these declarations as violently exclusive; as white feminist fantasies which sustain systems of marginalisation – including the attempted silencing of progressive women of colour on social media exchanges about US politics, women, and equality. I state at the outset my embrace of intersectional feminism, by which I refer to the understanding that women embody diverse relations to society and its structural inequalities, as experienced through their multiple identities, such as intersections of race with gender (Crenshaw, 1991; Dy et al., 2017). Intersectional feminism rejects support of political activity which works only for the privileged,

(white) few, and as a supporter of this movement, I have challenged the equation of a woman in power with support for the struggles of women – women who exist outside white neoliberal enclosures.

The impulse for this note is an urgent expression of this challenge, a documentation of distress in equating the *occupation* [italics to stress imperial implications] of a role with feminist achievement – without specifying what we are achieving, for whom, for which feminism. With this note, I maintain that inclusive feminism, which for me is expressed through intersectional feminist activism, is a starkly different enactment of feminism from the actions of women who reinforce masculine, corporate, imperial structures. These strivings are at best manifestations of white, neoliberal feminism, which wields violence and attempts to conceal marginalised voices and struggles.

One example of such white, neoliberal feminism, is the disturbing record of Clinton, demonstrating disregard for international human rights (e.g., Zunes, 2007; Barrett and Kumar, 2016). Clinton's history is marked by actions harming ethnic minorities and migrants (e.g., Nair, 2016) and a lack of support for LGBT rights (e.g., Schwarz, 2015; Young and Becerra, 2015) – and therefore a lack of support for women's rights and equality, if, in the spirit of intersectional feminism, we consider women living outside of white privileged bubbles, and heterosexist patriarchal norms, as deserving of equality. These, and other, instances of Clinton's legacy raise troubling – and crucial – questions about her nomination for, and anticipated US Presidency, as 'feminist' victory. I will in this note discuss and question what feminism – and whose feminism – this is. Whose voices are being excluded with these proclamations? This note advocates for surfacing contradictions between: 'feminism' that performs advocacy for women, and support of neoliberal figures such as Clinton, and seeks to probe these tensions, to pierce, to burst these white bubbles of *fantasy*.

Surfacing tensions between neoliberal 'feminism' and the project of intersectional feminism, through white fantasy: The unconscious is calling

Does anything other than neoliberal 'feminism' matter? And by neoliberal feminism, in this note I mean 'feminism' as embedded within the neoliberal agenda, in which welfare states and political structures for collective concerns are undermined or destroyed, while a market society, emphasising individual responsibility and 'choice', is elevated (Fotaki and Prasad, 2015). The stranglehold of neoliberal regimes leads to consequences like 'disavowing inequalities' (Scharff, 2016: 115); indeed, 'exclusionary processes may lie at the heart of neoliberalism' (*ibid*: 119). 'Feminism', therefore, as *trapped* within these neoliberal operations (or

experienced as liberating, for those privileged in space and time by market-led ideologies, or those with resources to seek out such spaces in the spirit of Sandberg's 2013 *Lean In* feminism) does not serve a humanitarian mission, an outreach to improve lives of women across racial groups, across social classes, across migrant status, across many dimensions of human experience. The use of quotation marks around 'feminism', in reference to neoliberal 'feminism', is deliberate, for there is a pointed, urgent questioning of what we mean by feminism, when this term is drawn into an exclusive, violent system of corporate, market-led, privileged experiences – violent, because it benefits privileged women on the backs of – and at the expense of – other women, and of men and children left behind, harmed by the operation of neoliberal agendas.

Reflecting on terms like neoliberal feminism and intersectional feminism, how can these contradictions, these tensions be explained, between: feminist public performativity, about the welfare of women and equality in society, and staunch defence of neoliberal figures and their ambitions as a cause for celebration? Celebration for whom? Who benefits from such triumph? Are we consciously aware of the feminist discourses that we invoke when we throw support behind a candidate? What *fantasies* influence our political attachments and emotional investments in discourses (Frosh and Baraitser, 2008; Gough, 2004)?

Oh, there it is! Fantasies; *the unconscious* (Freud, 1960); unconscious defences, attempting to alleviate unconscious anxieties – these resources offered by psychoanalysis paint a new portrait for understanding these bewildering contradictions manifesting on the surface (Gabriel, 1999). Unconscious fantasies to fulfil wishes, needs, desires – and the defences that are invoked, when fantasies are threatened and stimulate anxieties – these interconnecting dynamics, occurring unconsciously, provide remarkable analytic connectivity for confronting the contested meanings of feminism in daily political practices. I contend that fantasies fuel the priorities that are given to specific feminist public enactments, for instance in mainstream, corporate-supported spaces, privileging some voices and attempting to smother others – with material consequences.

And infusing into this analysis of fantasy in the US context is the crucial importance of confronting an explicit whiteness, an identification with the historical power of white systems, and therefore with triumph: *Feminism has won! The seat of power is occupied by a woman – rejoice!* Fantasy is that which is intimately threaded with our social encounters, for as Frosh (1999: 386-7) notes: '...the social is always **invaded** [author emphasis] by unconscious fantasy... what is apparently social and what is apparently psychological keep entwining with one another... social events are infused with fantasy...'. How is intersectional feminist understanding (e.g., Healy et al., 2011) – *invaded* by fantasies of feminism, by white

fantasy? The white fantasy's invasion of sisterhood, of women of colour – how might this fantasy manifest, in the 'feminist' celebration of Clinton's occupation of power, which feminist writer-activists contend has been used to advance invasive policies at home and imperialistically abroad (e.g., Featherstone, 2016)?

I propose the importance of analysing unconscious processes and white fantasy, taking as inspiration what I have been learning about intersectional feminism and the harmful effects of white feminism, from analyses by US women of colour activist writers (e.g., Muse, 2016; Getz, 2017), exposing whiteness in purportedly 'feminist' spaces. The support for Clinton as a feminist achievement for women demonstrates the ongoing damages of whiteness, upheld by fantasies, for the intersectional project of feminism, which recognises the complex oppressions that non-white, non-elite women encounter: from micro-aggressions to structurally embedded violence. In writing this piece for *ephemera*, I emphasise my positioning as an intersectional, global feminist, and as a US citizen, deeply affected by contrasting feminist discourses and attempts to suppress non-elite voices throughout the US Presidential election process. I have found intersectional approaches conceptually meaningful for building practices to support equality and emotionally supportive sisterhood, actively embracing, reaching out, seeking to learn from the experiences of the marginalised, the ignored, the excluded. Hence, I do not subscribe to, and actively challenge, neoliberal, white 'feminism' – its oppression serving only an elite few, and severely undermining the needs of most women, as well as some men (Fernández, 2016).

The fantasy of shattering the white ceiling

As a contemporary demonstration of the problems of neoliberal feminism presented as *the* face of feminism for women's concerns, what has been disturbing to me, from an intersectional perspective, was the presentation of Hillary Clinton as a feminist achievement, in the expectation of shattering the ultimate glass ceiling. I argue that this investment – a *psychic investment* (Midgley, 2006) – of the support of Clinton reveals a narrow desire to shatter what is ultimately the *white* ceiling. The striving towards breaking this white ceiling is possible by privileged, white, neoliberal women, and in some instances non-white women with privilege to reach elite bubbles; a shattering of this white ceiling confers individual benefits to those who emerge unscathed, keeping neoliberal power intact, and causes violence in reinforcing white supremacist systems. Breaking through this ceiling, therefore, becomes a triumph only for a select group of privileged women – and for those invested in the *fantasy* of what this ceiling breakage vicariously represents in the fulfilment of their desires.

This white fantasy perpetually wounds, neglects non-privileged women – the frenzy of fantasy manifests in multiply violent ways: from indifference, to psychological-physical harm, to repeated overt betrayals of the needs of non-white and non-elite women. As argued by Chang (2016) 'too often, shattering glass ceilings has only offered shards to the women down below'. I take this further – deep-seated fantasies for a privileged woman in the figure of Clinton to occupy a seat of imperial power, to shatter the white ceiling, violently hurtles the shards into the beings of underprivileged women, as well as men in the instances of imperial violence, and African American men in United States mass incarceration, the latter a racist system upheld by some women in power, including Hillary Clinton (Alexander, 2012).

The shards pierce human beings, tearing into the flesh, spilling blood, killing dreams, killing bodies, severing loved ones and families – this stated feminist triumph of glass ceiling splintering – sustained through white fantasy – manufactures oblivion to, and renders escape from responsibility for, past violence wielded by neoliberal policies that have damaged human lives, from domestic racist, anti-working class policies to embrace of international carnage (Eisenstein, 2016; Featherstone, 2016). Yet some feminists, women and men, on both sides of the pond were eagerly celebrating the coming of a woman through the glass ceiling, focussing on the flight of power, whiteness, and privilege crashing through to triumph, and resisting engagement with the splintering shards of pain, entrenchment of inequalities, injury, and death.

Disruption to followers' 'feminist' fantasies: Attendant anxieties and defences

The raw violence of Trump has received massive media and political attention, but the violence of the Clinton campaign throughout the Democratic primary process has not been named – it has been denied. Any suggestion – especially from women of colour activists and privileged allies – that Clinton and her corporate enclosures is not a feminist achievement, in the spirit of intersectional feminism – has been defended against through an array of defences, or defence mechanisms (A. Freud, 1966). These defence mechanisms function to protect the self from anxieties that arise from threats to the fantasy of upholding Clinton as one's feminist – and more deeply unconscious, white – ideal. Such defence mechanisms include fantasy itself as a form of denial (*ibid.*), a defence against confronting lived experiences that challenge one's own situated experience and relied-upon discourses. Further defences in the web of white fantasy are elaborated below. From a psychoanalytic framework, defences are unconscious responses to alleviate the intrapsychic distresses of anxieties, and they can operate across levels – individually (*ibid.*) as

well as organisationally and socially (Menzies, 1960; Lawlor and Sher, 2016). Defences at times can be adaptive, or mobilised in the short-term effectively for acute experiences (Gabriel, 1999), but defences may also be inhibiting, maladaptive, and even dangerous when reflexive work is missing, as with this note's position on the tragic consequences of fortifying white fantasies of neoliberal 'feminism'.

Becoming upswept in this white fantasy has manifested in stark tensions, such as silence or resistance from some feminists about potential violations of democratic process in the Democratic Party Primary of 2016, with debates about the Democratic National Committee rigging the contest for Democratic Presidential Candidate to Clinton (e.g., Brazile, 2017; DeMoro, 2016; Solomon, 2017). This Primary and its organising processes, and debates about the connection of Clinton to corporate interests (Niose, 2016) [*Corporate dominance? Whose 'feminism' is this?*], facilitated the result of the final US Presidential candidates and contributed to today's disturbing election result landscape, and attendant material consequences for feminist lives – women, men, and children, who live the misfortune of struggling outside white, elite, masculine neoliberal zones. Yet, disbelief and outrage about the US election's horrifying outcome have been *projected* by elite Democrat party members outwards.

Defence mechanisms such as projection (A. Freud, 1966) – projecting out all the painful distress of problems onto external factors outside one's own party, one's own group or organisation – provide an urgently needed analytic frame for these contradictions that bubble on the surface of discourses. For a defence to be invoked, there needs to be a threat, a disruptive anxiety (Gough, 2004).

A threat to:

The white feminist fantasy, To vicarious power, To the joyous triumph of neoliberal feminism,

may intrude as too much of a psychic injury, as too much to lose by facing one's own fantasy – and its potentially disturbing underpinning motivations. One defensive response is this projection (Gavin, 2003; Fotaki, 2006), this hurtling outward of emotional distress experienced in connection to a process or event – and with this US Presidential result, the grotesque figure of Trump was an easy source on which to project all horrifying feelings associated with the failure to usher in 'feminist' neoliberal candidate Clinton. The consequences of not collectively reflecting inward, facing the possibilities of these fantasies, are devastating.

Mind-boggling contradictions, devastating betrayals: Psychoanalysis offers its immense resources for social (in)justice analyses

The bewildering tensions on the surface – between professed feminist values of equality for women, and upholding of neoliberal figures globally such as Clinton as a feminist candidate – were particularly stark in the contrast of Clinton to her opponent in the Democratic Primary, Senator Bernie Sanders. What has been painfully striking has been the extent to which some have ignored or dismissed any critique of Clinton's track record, and resisted engagement with Sanders' record of service such as civil rights activism.

High-status, white feminists in the US have issued statements against Sanders, consequently undermining their own legacy of feminist activism, and insulting the diversity and intelligence of American women – and shamefully ignoring the progressive protests of women of colour against neoliberal feminism. Gloria Steinem, for instance, claimed that young women supporting Bernie Sanders were running after the young men supporting Sanders – 'when you're young [women], you're thinking, where are the boys? The boys are with Bernie' (Bruenig, 2016), which is an essentialised, heterosexist statement of shocking exclusiveness and condescension, that shattered my own fantasy as a US citizen on Steinem's greatness for the feminist cause. An intersectional feminism, that fights for and celebrates all women – heterosexual women, LGBTQ women, and respecting women as capable of thinking for themselves – is not the feminism that Steinem was embodying with this narrow, dehumanising standpoint.

This contrast of Sanders with Clinton, of associating Clinton with feminism and dismissing Sanders' feminism, hurtles to the surface the problematic of gender binaries, in associating women's bodies readily with feminism. This binary raises questions about who is 'allowed' to be a feminist, with consequences for articulating specific feminist agendas and advocating public figures as the 'right' representatives for the feminist cause. The ready association of feminism with only women's bodies undermines one of the causes of inclusive feminist movements – to smash gender binaries because they subordinate the non-cismale, the non-heteronormative (Ashcraft and Muhr, 2018), and to relieve humanity of the simplifications of these binaries socially constructed along oppressive power interests. That Sanders was yet another white male potentially reaching the seat of US power is of course a discourse with which to contend, but to equate automatically Clinton, as woman, with feminist achievement, and to dismiss Sanders as irrelevant to women's causes, despite having arguably a strong feminist political record, essentialises women, reinforces gender binaries, and entrenches inequalities.

Bringing in a psychoanalytic perspective, the white fantasy supports rigidity of binaries, as threats to the gender binaries can unleash anxieties. A fluid, inclusive, expansive approach to understanding women's struggles and marginalisation does not fit neatly within a structured binary, by which privileged women in neoliberal systems can strive for the white ceiling and celebrate feminist triumph. Fantasies at times may interfere with responding to contemporary externalities, fortifying instead 'certain binary oppositions' (Gabriel, 1997: 330), with painful outcomes, as emphasised in this note's focus.

What can explain such behaviours and resistance to engaging with difficult questions about the potential first woman US President, and the effects of policies and actions upon women, men, children – upon communities? Psychoanalysis reminds us that formal education and training, appointed status, formal job roles, professed beliefs do not shield us from our capacity for irrationality, contradiction, betrayal of what we claim, as humans with unconscious desires, with fantasies. The resources of psychoanalysis are crucial for these social justice interrogations – by surfacing and talking about these desires, by mobilising communities to hold to account elites whose actions betray their professed beliefs, we can strive for actualising solidarity and battling inequality.

Calling out the attacks on Sanders is not an attempt to elevate any one candidate as perfect or beyond critique. Indeed, activists of colour critique Sanders and hold him to account, expressing when and why they disagree with his or any other politician's standpoint. The Sanders movement achieved incredible transformations, defying many barriers in US election processes such as mobilising grassroots passion and support, explicitly without the involvement of corporate funding – the shattering of these barriers is closely aligned to feminist aims of equality – if, this is what we mean by feminism. Why is the overcoming of these barriers not being celebrated? Why have the actions of youth activists, of people across diverse US groups been vilified instead? Is the glass ceiling the only desirable barrier to shatter for feminism, and what fantasies are indulged in focussing on this barrier?

The unconscious striving toward fantasy, as understood through psychoanalysis, satisfies emotional needs of individuals with unconscious expectations of their leaders (Gabriel, 1997), and in this note, I am explicitly connecting the unconscious wishes of followership fantasy with whiteness and power, arguing that it is a *white fantasy* that has supported neoliberal 'feminism', in contrast to intersectional feminism which strives for understanding the diverse, historically-situated experiences of women. Gabriel's work provides resonance here: 'One dominant characteristic of our fantasy life is its disregard for the endless complexities and nuances of the real world' (Gabriel, 1997: 330). The dangers of

this white fantasy call out for direct confrontation of celebrating neoliberal candidates such as Clinton as a triumph for the cause of women, when non-white, non-elite women of the real world are not included.

Psychoanalysis repeatedly calls out with its concepts, to help confront social ills and inequalities (Gabriel, 1999; Fotaki et al., 2012), which often manifest as bewildering contradictions, as that which is not rational. The avowed support for neoliberal politics, as feminist achievement, defies understanding, in that some ostensibly leftist and feminist voters defend policies which hurt people of colour, and overlook the exclusive 'feminism' of Clinton's and other neoliberal politicians' past actions (Getz, 2017; Gray, 2017), emphasising 'experience' instead. Psychic investment in discourses such as a candidate's extensive political 'experience' provides a formidable defence (Frosh, 1999) against facing grassroots concerns and marginalised encounters. It is this complicity, enacted through asserting that one must support Clinton to support women and feminism, and buoyed up by white fantasies of power – that helped to get us here.

And there's no crawling out, until we push against the currents of white feminist fantasy, conveniently serving neoliberal agendas, and drowning the humanitarian causes of a feminism that recognises the nuances of women's human struggles, from different spaces and affected in varied ways by societal structures – for me this is an intersectional feminism that is betrayed by embrace of neoliberal global power-holders, and fortified by white fantasies.

Fantasies through identification

The desire to experience a woman as President may be a desire masking deeper intrapsychic strivings to align with power. The defence mechanism of identification with the aggressor (Nandy, 1982) provides an analysis of resistance to objective knowledge about a candidate, and the presentation of a candidate as feminist, by mainstream feminists (Crispin, 2017) who claim to stand for, speak on behalf of women, in circumstances very different from their own. Identification with the aggressor depicts an intrapsychic dynamic in which a person defends against the anxieties of being in a socially subordinate position – in this case, being a woman in global systems dominated by men and masculine norms – by unconsciously idealising and aligning to the more powerful player(s) in the system(s). Identifying with Clinton, with the discourses advanced by power structures within the Democratic National Committee, with Clinton advocates organising on her behalf, eases the anxieties of subordinate status. In so doing, the white fantasy, in this instance as materialised through support of Clinton, becomes

less about celebrating a feminist achievement, but instead more about riding the white wave into power, and achieving psychic delight through this identification.

The support for Clinton to be the first woman US President – and therefore at this stage the most powerful person of the world – also fulfils a fantasy of defeating misogyny. If a woman can break the imperial white ceiling – the height of global power – the impossible has been accomplished, and we can celebrate – *We Made It!* – an unconscious satisfaction that then relieves responsibility for the more difficult, day-to-day struggles of multiple oppressed groups of women. Surfacing this psychic investment is crucial from an intersectional feminist perspective, as a movement against violent inequalities in *all* forms – including imperial violence. The devastating celebration of a candidate who has not called for different ways of relating and being in the world begs for our difficult, deep reflections and surfacing of troublesome fantasies.

Profound social transformations are needed to change the masculine structures that are kept intact when women climb to positions of power, but the anxieties of doing this hard work are diminished, when the fantasy fixates on the notion that a woman has defeated sexism by shattering the white ceiling. Longing for this fantasy of triumph fulfils narcissistic feelings of satisfaction, through identification with the aggressor. I draw upon HF Stein's (1997) analysis of identification with the aggressor, as expressed through the example of working hard, in attempt to defend against organizational downsizing; tragically, it is a 'defense that works for the short term [and] is powerless to influence the long term to which it submits and, more ironically, is complicit in bringing about' (HF Stein, 1997: 244). Adapting his analysis to this context, of identifying with the white feminist fantasy as manifested in the candidacy of Clinton, the defence satisfies desires by psychic lifting of anxiety and generation of hopeful fantasies, but it ultimately fails in supporting long-term intersectional feminism and is complicit in entrenching mainstream, neoliberal 'feminism', which, from the standpoint of intersectional understanding, undermines commitment to the needs and rights of all women and equality in society.

Narcissism is a central dynamic to consider (Gabriel, 1997) for probing the organising processes of followers in relation to the idealised feminist candidate. There has been analysis of the dangers of Trump's narcissistic leadership for the future (M. Stein, 2016), and I argue that a focus on followers and their fantasies about leaders, with the resources of psychoanalysis emphasising unconscious processes (Freud, 1914), enriches our understanding of the path leading to the tragedy of the Trump US presidential victory and its horrifying aftermath. I encourage applying an analysis of narcissism to *followers*, not just to political leaders – what narcissistic desires are satisfied by aligning with leaders (Gabriel,

1997)? The agendas of corporate, neoliberal feminism, in reaching materially or vicariously the pinnacle of masculine systems – but not challenging these systems – confer narcissistic satisfaction to the privileged, through identification with the aggressor. In consequence, feminist projects – specifically, work that serves intersectional aims for the lived struggles of women from diverse groups – are undermined, and viable political contenders and people advocates like Nina Turner (Meyerson, 2017; Stockwell, 2017), Bernie Sanders, and similar progressive politicians, with documented social justice records, are suppressed, with heart-wrenching outcomes, intensifying existing social inequalities and ills.

Inspiration from writings and activism of People of Colour, to make a psychoanalytic contribution to organisational and postfeminist literature

There have been searing, incisive analyses of the front of feminism in Clinton's campaign and neoliberal Democratic organising, using the term of feminism for personal gain, while masking a history painting a different picture (e.g., Featherstone, 2016; Muse, 2016). Yet, these outstanding analyses by feminist progressive activists, women of colour, have remained on the fringes, while denial and other defences on Clinton's behalf following her defeat abide in mainstream channels. A psychoanalytic perspective invites discomforting, but crucial questions about social tragedies and their underpinnings. This work represents an attempt to articulate in academic space emotional distress that I have experienced throughout the US Presidential Election Process, analysing the connection of fantasies, anxieties, and defences to US election organising processes, and the expression or suppression of voices in social media political discourses.

It is my hope, building upon the space offered by *ephemera* with this note, to elaborate in further research on the intricacies of these unconscious processes as connected to contemporary feminist discourses, with the long-term aim of injecting more frequently a psychoanalytic understanding into organising processes and whiteness of neoliberal feminism. I hope this piece contributes to emerging attention in management and organisational studies about the complicity of the elite in contemporary organising, inspired for instance by the work of Chowdhury (2017), and this note emphasises challenging elite complicity of those who work for, or are identified members of ostensibly 'good' organisations, such as the Democratic party, for their role in enabling tragic effects upon individuals and communities.

In our academic endeavours, we can create more space for analyses of contrasts between professed and performed leftist, feminist, humanitarian expressions, and enacted, defended realities on the ground that may betray their aims. Bringing

psychoanalytic resources more frequently into these analyses, provides potent opportunities to make sense of, and take action on, these contradictions, thereby contributing to the importance of psychoanalysis for management and organisational research (e.g., Gabriel, 2015; Prasad, 2014; Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2013; HF Stein, 2008). Interweaving analysis of racial dynamics with these contemporary feminist concerns, through the resource of unconscious processes and *fantasy*, contributes to debates about the concept and use of postfeminism and neoliberalism in analyses of work and organisations (e.g., Gill et al., 2017; Lewis, 2014), and analyses of women located outside the mainstream of their work contexts (Śliwa and Johansson, 2014).

With regard to postfeminist literature, Scharff (2016) has contributed analyses about the 'psychic life' of neoliberalism, focussing on the subjective experiences of a group of young women workers; Scharff's analysis does not take a psychoanalytic perspective or make reference to unconscious processes. My note is hopefully active support for interweaving the richness of psychoanalytic resources into contending with our complex lived experiences and the varied feminist discourses deployed to make sense of and respond to them.

Connecting to analyses of the meanings of postfeminism and contemporary struggles (Gill et al., 2017), I propose explicitly probing societal dynamics of whiteness and its fantasies in relation to these unfolding debates. Gill et al. (2017: 230) discuss the concept of postfeminism as 'a disavowal of any need for radical social transformations of gender'. I advocate for asking: What *psychic functions* do these disavowals serve within racial structures? How can *unconscious* processes, notably *anxieties* and *fantasies* interwoven with racial dynamics, be addressed through sustained, difficult, in-depth exploration? How does *whiteness*, with its embedded structures and reinforcement from fantasies, manifest in the current debates about feminism in contemporary spaces, even when not explicitly named? How can our writing in academic and activist spaces decentre Anglo, American, Euro-centric writing and focus, to work with these questions in expanded, intersectional, global ways? What might we gain from doing so?

Concluding, and opening up

This note begins and concludes, and opens up to more, through inspiration by women of colour and progressive writers, activists, academics, community members – their work prompts reflection on how they are affected by, and what we collectively as humans lose, in privileging white, neoliberal feminism in public spaces and discourses.

Two encounters are highlighted here, in hopes of connecting the concepts of feminism and psychoanalysis that I have attempted to explore in this note for *ephemera*. These exchanges focus on Clinton as the recent embodiment of debates about women and inequalities in neoliberal zones.

The first one:

A sharp recent illustration of Clinton's response to the needs and concerns of African Americans is shown in a video of Ashley Williams, an African American Black Lives Matter protestor's civil disruption to an exclusive, expensive campaign gathering, resulting in Clinton's callous dismissal of this protestor who raised crucial social issues (Helm, 2016; Gosztola, 2016; Miller, 2016).

How might white fantasies relate to these encounters?

The second one:

Professor Donna Murch (2016: 89) begins her chapter, 'The Clintons' war on drugs:

Why black lives didn't matter', with this passage, in which she introduces the encounter, shares the words of activist Daunasia Yancey, and continues with her analysis of the significance of these interactions:

> In August 2015, an uncomfortable encounter between Black Lives Matter (BLM) protestors and Hillary Clinton finally broke the silence of many mainstream press outlets on the Clintons' shared responsibility for the disastrous policies of mass incarceration and its catalyst, the war on drugs... After expressing her ardent feminism and pride in meeting a female presidential candidate, BLM's Daunasia Yancey forcefully confronted Clinton about her shared culpability in America's destructive war on drugs: [the italics refer to Daunasia's Yancey's words addressed to Clinton]:
>
> *"You and your family have been personally and politically responsible for policies that have caused health and human services disasters in impoverished communities of color through the domestic and international war on drugs that you championed as first lady, senator and secretary of state."* Yancey continued, *"And so I just want to know how you feel about your role in that violence, and how you plan to reverse it?"*
>
> Yancey's question deftly turned Hillary's use of her husband's presidency as political qualification on its head: If her term as first lady deeply involved in policy issues qualifies her for the presidency, then she could be held responsible for policies made during those years. (Murch, 2016: 89-90)

How does white, neoliberal feminism thrive by attempting to push discussion about these encounters to the margins?

How do fantasies, anxieties, defences – key unconscious processes – mark these relational dynamics?

...

Looking back, yearning forward

Of course, I want to see women occupy positions of power – to experience a woman as President of my birth country. And, as a feminist activist academic, I want women who are intersectional in their approach – for me this effort strives to work with the marginalised. I hope for women who dare to challenge entrenched systems, to be the ones who rise to power. I embrace women devoted to struggle. I bow down in respect and gratitude to Nina Turner. To Pramila Jayapal. To Kshama Sawant. Why aren't these women household names like Clinton?

Why indeed.

I embrace and desire for women to be my leaders, who do not simply rise through ranks to enjoy and reinforce American white systems. Women of courage. I celebrate women and men who use power to fight for justice.

I do not, will not, rally behind essentialised notions of women, to reinforce existing inhumane systems. I wish to challenge fantasies that help to keep gender binaries intact. Does this not undermine feminism – to limit what we can critique and challenge, on the basis of biological gender?

Do not call this feminism. Or at least call it for what it is – neoliberal feminism, corporate feminism... but for me, this is perverting the use of the term.

Call it power. Call it whiteness.

Call it white fantasy, which claims to care for women beyond elite clubs but evidences actions to the contrary – this is not my feminism.

Enough with these perversions.

Call it control. Call it neoliberal self-interestedness.

But don't dare to call this support of Clinton, of neoliberal power circles, feminist.

This is not my feminism. This is not what women and men of colour, what LGBTQ individuals, intimately connected to their communities and fighting against barriers at the grassroots, doing the hard work, are teaching us.

If only we would listen.

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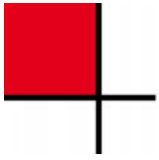
Entitlement racism and its intersections: An interview with Philomena Essed, social justice scholar

Philomena Essed and Sara Louise Muhr

abstract

Everyday discrimination, for example in the form of everyday racism or everyday sexism, is a concept that has motivated and influenced the debate about how a racial hierarchy controls the way organizations are structured and practiced. In this interview, social justice scholar Philomena Essed reflects on the relationship between her early work on 'everyday racism' and her newly theorized concept 'entitlement racism'. She wisely links this move to current political developments and to other 'isms' and 'phobias' such as sexism, classism, homophobia and Islamophobia. As such, an intersectional approach lingers all through the interview, and towards the end of the interview this link is succinctly unfolded by Essed and explicitly addressed in a way that surprises and amazes the interviewer as much as herself.

Introduction

Organizational scholars have for quite some time been occupied with the structures and dimensions of everyday (or subtle) discrimination (e.g. Deitch et al., 2003; Van Laer and Janssens, 2011), most notably perhaps in the form of everyday sexism and everyday racism. Authors have persuasively demonstrated how raced and gendered power hierarchies are constructed and reinforced through normalizing everyday practices such as jokes, storytelling, generalizations or even so-called compliments. In and of themselves, these practices can be said to be 'innocent', 'insignificant' or 'just for fun'. However, when they are continually reiterated, they become culturally normalized and end up functioning as systematic discrimination against minorities, which reinforce majority privilege

(Ahonen et al., 2014; Holck and Muhr, 2017; Liu and Baker, 2016; Muhr and Salem, 2013).

Social justice scholar Philomena Essed has been a defining figure in the debate about everyday racism (see e.g. Essed, 1990, 1991, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2013; Essed and Goldberg, 2002; Essed and Hoving, 2014; Essed and Trienekens, 2008). As most race and discrimination research is conducted at a macro level, her remarkable and ground-breaking 1991 book *'Understanding everyday racism: An interdisciplinary theory'* initiated and cemented the value of a micro perspective, as she analyzed the everyday intersectional gendered social construction of race and racism in the Netherlands and the US based on interviews with Black women. She brilliantly demonstrated how racism is practiced through everyday subtle and accepted behavior.

Lately, however, the political discourse has changed. It has become more acceptable to speak about other people in racist, sexist, homophobic or Islamophobic terms. Discrimination that, just ten years ago, was wrapped 'nicely' in a politically correct tone or a 'funny' joke is now being uttered straight out. As an illustration of this, take for example the more and more rough anti-Islam rhetoric that has become almost mainstream in the daily media, as well as the socially accepted sexist behavior in online fora – such as Trump's self-declared right to 'grab them by the pussy', which was excused as 'locker room talk' – and finally the explanations and normalization of sexual harassment, as we have seen in the Harvey Weinstein scandal and the following responses to the #metoo campaign. Opposite everyday racism and sexism, these examples are out in the open, without any effort to disguise them, and are used in a way where the offender often claims a right to be able to behave in this way.

It is as if we have forgotten about history. It is as if our belief in equality, individuality, progress and welfare has numbed our sense of justice and left us with a postfeminist, color-blind and christonormative illusion (see Ferber, 2012). Highly sexist or racist statements and jokes are being normalized. The problematic issue here is that after decades of decolonization and feminist battles, people seem to believe that 'we are equal' and thus regard feminist or anti-racist activism as 'unnecessary' or 'hyper sensitive'. However, we argue here that it is not unnecessary or hyper sensitive to react to racist or sexist behavior. It is perhaps even more necessary than ever, now that 'locker-room' talk and racist jokes are becoming legitimate discourse. So, what characterizes this new discourse? What makes it different from earlier ones? What does it produce? How does it influence people? What can we do about it?

To investigate these questions further, we reached out to social justice scholar Philomena Essed, who is Professor of Critical Race, Gender and Leadership Studies at Antioch University. Professor Essed is a key and founding voice in the scholarly debate on everyday racism and gendered racism, and she has shown a lifelong commitment to social justice including issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability and religion.

Key publications include the now seminal books '**Everyday racism: Reports from women of two cultures**' (Hunter House, 1990), '**Understanding everyday racism: An interdisciplinary theory**' (SAGE publications, 1991) and '**Diversity: Gender, color, and culture**' (University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).

In April 2016 Professor Essed came to Copenhagen Business School, where she gave a keynote on entitlement racism and was part of a panel discussion on refugees and the transformation of societies. The keynote was commented by discussant Professor Martin Parker from University of Leicester (as this is published, University of Bristol). Following the event, Philomena Essed was interviewed by Sara Louise Muhr, and the interview was transcribed and edited by Muhr and subsequently commented by Parker. The interview with Essed follows below and the comment by Parker is published as an individual piece following the interview (in this issue).

The interview

Sara Louise Muhr:

How did you first come to think about the concept of entitlement racism?

Philomena Essed:

There is one event that I know in retrospect triggered a great deal of thought: the 'racist cake' event in Sweden in 2012. I was in a classroom in South Africa, co-teaching a methodology course with three or four colleagues. Because it was a day-long course, we would take turns, while the other facilitators would be sitting at the back of the room of a class of maybe 40 students. And it was my turn to sit at the back of the class and observe. Suddenly this noise came from one of the computers, which was being used by one of the other facilitators, also at the back of the room. She was probably checking her emails or something, which was fair enough. I could hear her click a button, and suddenly this enormous scream tore through the room. All faces turned into her direction. She frantically tried to get rid of the screen, but because she was nervous she couldn't find the button. And from the computer came these screams and then laughter and then another spine-

chilling scream. For what seemed to be a long time, but was probably only 30 seconds, she struggled to get rid of the noise. Later, when I asked her what had caused the commotion, she said, 'Well, it was this horrible thing in Sweden'. It turned out to be a news item about the then minister of culture in Sweden, slicing a cake shaped as a big black woman. She had to stab into the vagina area in order to cut the cake. The artist was hidden under the table, his head stuck inside the cake's head, and once the minister cut the cake, the artist screamed [that was most likely the blood-curdling scream that Professor Essed had heard in class, red.].

This incident triggered conversations about whether this was art, was it permissible, what do you do about it. I had never before been engaged with such issues in relation to art. I know how important it is to have artistic freedom and freedom of expression, but it just made me think: why did the artist, even when in subsequent public interviews he identified as Afro-Swedish, why did he choose this format to say what he wanted to say? The artistic point was to protest FGM [female genital mutilation, red], but he could have chosen other formats. For one, why did he have to use an adult's body, when FGM is something that happens mostly to girls or young women, and also why in this stereotypical and demeaning way? But when I discussed this, some people would just say 'art is art, you cannot

question art'. And I thought, 'well, hang on a minute; in the name of art, you are allowing racist images...' But I let the matter rest.

Then there was another bothersome development about the same time. Islamophobia had been normalized in the Netherlands. You could say anything ugly you wanted to about Muslims, about perceived Muslims. It got to the point where I could not bear it any longer and I just needed to write about it. This became the article 'Intolerable humiliations' (see Essed, 2009), in which I, being very cautious, argued that if you humiliate a culture, you humiliate everybody who identifies with that culture, and you dehumanize that group. And then what? What do you expect the group to do? Feel happy about it? Or to also respond in a way that is public as well? And that might be a very unpleasant response. I compared the dehumanization of Muslims, in the Netherlands in particular targeting Moroccan immigrants, to a sort of cultural assassination. It's a big word, but that is what it comes down to at the end of the day. That you want to see a culture or a religion completely erased. And I just thought to myself, how could it be OK for the Dutch to express ethnic-religious hate and disgust publicly, a discourse that is so ugly?

Then came the whole debate about Zwarte Piet, the Black Pete figure in the Netherlands[1], and whether it was a tradition that should be kept or stopped [out of respect for black people, red.].

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[1]   In the Netherlands Santa Claus has a little helper called Zwarte Piet. On December 5th people paint their faces and dress up as Zwarte Piet, which has caused a huge debate about whether this is 'just tradition' or a highly racist way of practising racial suppression.

Native Dutch responses flying across social media and other public spaces were so racist, so viciously hateful, even murderous in many ways. Calling for people to be hanged, to be pushed into the sea [for suggesting that the way Zwarte Piet was portrayed was racist, red.]. Not all responses were like this, of course; they ranged from concerns about why we have to change our very culture or tradition to death threats. And I thought, something is wrong; there was no real protest against the fact that you cannot say these things.

I realized, deeply, how something has been shifting, which pointed me to the idea of entitlement racism – that people feel they are allowed to say whatever they want, whenever they want, about whomever they want, in the name of freedom of expression. And it becomes relevant in terms of freedom of expression. Not only where it is against a particular person, but also where it is against representatives of a particular culture, and in that sense against that culture, or against that quote unquote race, at the same time. But, you know, in the 2000s anybody who wants to, who has the basic skills and technology to participate in social media, can access all the information they want in order to know what racism is about. You are being asked not to use the Black Pete figure because it is experienced as demeaning. Thoughtfully, many would say, we don't want to take away your tradition, only this one figure. There are other ways to celebrate Santa Claus; there are other ways to honor what is otherwise a lovely family tradition of fun, exchanging gifts and sharing joy. Taking away Zwarte Piet doesn't have to diminish that. You can make the iteration, if people continue to argue that the ways in which the figure of Zwarte Piet is used are racist, that it reinforces racism, why is it then so difficult to discontinue that part of the tradition? Many more (Dutch) traditions have been changed in the course of history, in order to achieve more gender equality, better health care, education for all and so on.

Similarly, what is so difficult when people say, 'Don't use the N-word'? What difference does it make to you, to not use it? There are plenty of other words. But apparently, people feel *entitled* to do so. I connected this to the boundless degree of tolerance for other forms of racist expression, such as the mushrooming degree of Islamophobia across Europe. Combining all these aspects illuminated to me that gradually the door has been opened again for boundless expression of race-related racism as well. Before, it was a taboo to say something about skin color; you would make a detour so as not to have to mention color. And I am not saying that that was better, but you at least had a sense of 'We don't do that', and that has turned into, 'So why should we not be able to do that? What is your problem?' This new boldness I wanted to capture with the notion of entitlement racism. That people seem to feel that they have the right to offend – that the freedom of expression is interpreted not as a freedom to be used for the common good, to be used in a way that does not humiliate others, but as a license to offend. And that

has included, for instance, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who gave a speech in 2005 in Germany, in which she in so many words claimed her right to offend[2]. Let's stop here for a moment and ask: What is dignified in offending people? Why do you think you deserve respect for doing that? Why can't we instead point at a problem, urge for dialogue about this? Yes, we can and should protest against what we see as injustices, concerns, violations of norms and values. But do we really have to humiliate others in doing so? Humiliation causes scars that are very difficult to heal. So, these were some of the considerations that encouraged me to look at whether there has been a shift in the way that racism is expressing itself. And one could say, yes, Islamophobia has opened the gates towards more open anti-black racism as well. But at the same time, because we are living in times where, in principle, a body of knowledge is available to inform you what racism is about, and yet you continue to use these now more open forms again, you must feel that you are entitled to do that.

SLM:

How do you think people have responded to the concept of entitlement racism?

PE:

Usually at talks I give, often international, or teaching about it, there is an aha-effect of recognition when I describe entitlement racism as racism in the name of freedom of expression. Actually, I haven't used it that much yet – I think once or twice in the Netherlands – although I've just written a new introduction to the reissue of my very first book on everyday racism for a broader audience. It was first written in Dutch in 1984. In order to make the leap from 1984 to 2017, I wrote a new introduction and also added a chapter on entitlement racism. The notion was very difficult to translate into Dutch. So, I still have to see how the Dutch audience will respond to that. But internationally, it has been an eye-opener most of the times.

SLM:

It is interesting that you added a chapter on entitlement racism to the *Everyday Racism* book. Could you elaborate on the difference? Or on how the concept of everyday racism has somehow evolved into entitlement racism?

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[2]   See   http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ayaan-hirsi-ali/defending-the-right-to-offend_b_7104960.html

PE:

Well, in 1984 everyday racism was often expressed more covertly. But everyday racism is not by definition implicit and covert. It depends on the country and time of history. It seems that entitlement racism is reshaping everyday racism. Or, actually, it has become a form of everyday racism.

SLM:

Yes, and maybe also less embarrassing?

PE:

I agree, because when you feel entitled to say these things, you don't have to feel embarrassed by the points you make. Thirty years ago, people would feel embarrassed. But now many think they have the right to say these things. And of course, this is not general across the public. It is contested. Some people will engage in it and some will not. But there are certainly more than in the past who feel that it is OK to make these overtly racist statements – in the name of freedom of expression.

SLM:

I assume you believe in freedom of expression as well, so how do you suggest that we work with both freedom of expression and also a care for each other – or a care for not offending each other?

PE:

Freedom of expression is hugely important, especially at the moment, of attempts – in US, in Turkey, in France, in the Netherlands – and unfortunately successful attempts, to establish authoritarian regimes, advocating 'I say so and you do so'. Characteristic for these regimes, – look at Turkey, for instance – is that intellectuals, journalists, artists and activists – those who use freedom of expression professionally, whether critical or not – become the first targets: from being detained, to losing your job, to maybe even being assassinated. So, we know how extremely important it is to live in a country where you have freedom of expression – and freedom of expression can never be taken as a given, because it can be snatched away from you. We have to continue to be alert about, to fight for and to treasure this freedom. Having said this, once you have this freedom in your country – or in your environment – it becomes important not to claim it all the time, but to use it *responsibly*. And by responsibly, I mean that you use it in a way that does not unnecessarily humiliate others. And yes, sometimes being offensive

or taken as such can be unavoidable, but one doesn't have to humiliate. Although the line between offence and humiliation can be very thin. I am not saying that you can never say something that is blunt or hard – sometimes that is necessary. But caution is needed not to humiliate, because that is what causes wounds. If you are offended by something, or you don't like it – again, the line between offence and humiliation can be very thin – you can also shrug your shoulders, or think, 'Ah well, it wasn't that bad'. But if it leaves an emotional scar – and that is what humiliation does – it takes longer to heal. And that is why we don't need to be reckless or claim the right here and now that you can say anything you want. Such absolute individualism borders on narcissism and desensitizes to the needs of others. It sort of diminishes your emotional intelligence, because it reduces the ability to empathize, empathy being the ability to perceive the world from another point of view besides your own. Empathy is a form of intelligence, emotional and often at the same time cultural. You don't need a PhD for that. It develops through care about others, making observations throughout live and everyday learning whether or not in formal school settings. If your emotional intelligence fades as a consequence of, for example, increased violence in society, it becomes easier to dehumanize others. And once that process takes on, the dehumanized are perceived as not relevant to society... not relevant in life, which makes their lives dispensable in your eyes. Not even worthy of being... It is a downward spiraling path once you open the door of dehumanization.

SLM:

So, there is a notion – and probably a very difficult notion – of ethics here, isn't there?

PE:

Absolutely. Morality is knowing good from bad, and ethics is the theory you attach to honoring what society has agreed is good and respectable and caring and responsible behavior. The ethics involved here is basically to respect that another human being deserves to be, even when you totally disagree with or even despise what they are doing. It is important to distinguish between the inherent value of life, and the value, or lack of value or dignity, of certain behavior.

SLM:

There is this very difficult notion of ethics behind this. Because if you ask who is to decide – who is to decide what is humiliating or not and who is to decide what is good freedom of speech and what isn't – that is where it begins to get tricky. Do

you try to stay away from those kinds of questions, or do you try to engage with them?

PE:

No, I don't try to stay away from them. Basically, I think that there are at least two indicators of when something is humiliating: if the person feels humiliated, and if society thinks that what happened is humiliating because you are being demeaned. And again, the line between being demeaning and humiliation is sometimes invisible, although these are different concepts. A very important indicator is to find out whether a person *feels* humiliated. If you have reasonable cause to feel that you have been humiliated, then one has to take it seriously. The second question, then, is to explain why. Why does it make you feel humiliated? And then, as a person who has said or done something that another person has experienced as humiliating, you can take the responsibility to listen to what is being said. The question then is, what does this feeling of humiliation say about you. Could it be that it triggers a very particular experience, something that has happened in your life that makes you feel humiliated, whereas another person would not find it humiliating at all? Let's see whether this is particular to the person or whether others of the same group – in case of racial humiliation – would agree about the humiliating nature of the act. Is this something that society at large would see as humiliating as well? Finally, yes only *finally* and not as the starting point, there is the intent of the person who has done something that has been experienced as humiliating. The mistake we often make is to look at intent and motivation first, which sort of ruins the conversation, because, sure, it would routinely be 'I did not mean it that way'… although with entitlement racism, the intent is also to offend, if not to humiliate. That is also why I call it entitlement racism. And the intent here is an extended intent, as in, you could have known, but you were indifferent, too lazy, or you didn't care enough to inform yourself.

SLM:

And I guess this is where it becomes very important that discrimination – or humiliation – happens when someone feels discriminated against. Because with acts classified as 'everyday racism', it would in principle be enough to say, 'You are actually discriminating against somebody'. Maybe the offender didn't know, and maybe this kind of exposure or clarification would make the person reconsider. However, in entitlement racism, the person who is racist feels entitled to be racist, and the concept is arguing, I suppose, that this person has less interest in seeing the other person's point of view. And isn't that the problem?

PE:

That is a problem with entitlement racism, yes. Although I avoid calling a person racist – I would rather call *behavior* racist. A sense of entitlement indicates also a backlash against a sense of being a victim of your own goodness – the complaint that 'I cannot say anything anymore without being called a racist'. I am referring here to the aggressive response to antiracism, when any moral statement about racism used to be ridiculed disparagingly with 'don't give me that political correct blah-blah'. This is typically also the mode of populism and can be early signs of fascism: feeding into a sense of victimhood among the population at large in order to identify and destroy those who stand in the way of authoritarian regimes to rise. It's like feeling relieved about not having to care about the impact of what we say. Whereas with many other things in life, if you want to achieve something, you don't just go and do it. You often think, 'What is it exactly that I want to achieve by doing this? Am I contributing to that, or making the situation worse?' In many other instances in our lives, we think more carefully about the possible impact of what we are about to do. But in acts of entitlement racism, it becomes: 'I don't care about it, I am just going to say it, because this is how I feel'. It is my right to express how I feel. At this point change is urgent. And it might come not in the least because of ugliness-fatigue. I think people might grow tired of the ugliness around us. Ugliness wears on you to the point where you might question why we are doing this to ourselves? Do I really have to say these ugly things when nobody is forcing me to say them?

SLM:

Yes, and that is exactly why I wanted to ask you about how you see this in relation to more recent events – Trump, Wilders, the Women's March, as well as the whole debate about the pussy hat.

PE:

Those 'pussy grabbing' statements were clearly cases of entitlement sexism. Like: 'not only have I said it, I am certainly not even going to apologize'. And from the responses, you could see that there were a lot of people who thought: this is too much. There is already increasing exhaustion about what Trump is going to say next. There is only so much people can tolerate in terms of ugliness. You get tired of it, but then there is also the danger that some people might withdraw feeling 'let him do what he wants; let them do what they want. I am just not going to participate in any of this'. It might also be that people begin to change their language and become more careful. One of the people who is really good is Rokhaya Diallo from France. She is a journalist and actually was exposed to a

mixture of entitlement racism and sexism. In her work, she actively defends the dignity of people of color, the dignity of religion, and fights against discrimination in France. An amazing woman. Very active, organizing one critical event after another. As a result, she received threatening emails, one of which called for her to be raped. Which is of course absolutely sexist, and given that she is black and because of the kind of work she does, you cannot separate it from race either, or from racism. She hired a lawyer and initiated a court case, but at the same time, it prompted her, parallel to her case, to conduct a journalistic investigation of women who had been exposed to threats on social media because of the work they do. She pictured, for example, the only woman in a tech environment and one of the ministers of France, and how they dealt with social media threats. The result was an incredible documentary, which reported her case in relation to a larger phenomenon. And those are the kinds of examples that point in the direction of where we need to go. We can do something constructive as well with dismal experiences. And in the end, it turned out that the person who had called for this grave violation of her bodily integrity was in a way a pretty powerless person. She felt sorry for him as the $2,000 fine he would have to pay was going to be a lot of money for him. And as a viewer of the documentary it wasn't either that you felt like, 'Oh, we got him'. It was a sad situation. But because of the fact that she had embedded her own story in a broader context, it went beyond just going after this one person. Which I thought was a beautiful example of what you can do in cases like this.

SLM:

So, what are we to do? What strategies can we follow? Both as individual people and as a society?

PE:

As individual people, we become more than individual people depending on the profession we have. When you are in your classroom, you are the professor, but you are more than a professor: you represent your discipline, you represent your university, you are in a leading role, and that has a larger impact than a one-on-one discussion with your neighbor next door. People in responsible positions and in leadership positions – from the teacher to the pastor, to the representative in parliament, to the prime minister – have a responsibility to give and to live a different example. Beyond one-person-with-larger-impact kind of interventions there are also legal ways, although I think that legal ways should be the last resort and not the first resort. Or maybe not the last resort, but let me put it this way: it doesn't have to be the first resort. Because a) when you go legal the case will be

limited by the confines of legal language, and b) other interests get involved as well.

SLM:

Yes, it might take the entitlement away, but not the racism?

PE:

Exactly. Whereas, leading by example is one thing everybody can do. And then I think there could be codes of behavior in the workplace, whether that is a university or somewhere else. Engage in – and initiate – conversations about what is acceptable and what is not and how you can help people to immediately respond with, 'This is not OK'. Because often when you are a witness you do not necessarily agree, but sometimes you might feel afraid to say something too. There is this wonderful book by Kristina Thalhammer and others (Thalhammer et al., 2007) called '*Courageous resistance*', about conditions needed for people to become courageous resisters as a life style or to courageously resist situationally. It has to do with socialization and with the kind of country in which you live. With societal norms, with family values you grew up with. With your networks, and whether you only identify with a 'we' group when considered homogenous, or whether your 'we' group includes others than just the people who look like you. Whether according to quote unquote race, ethnicity, gender – make sure that our 'we' group is a broader group. And the more diverse the 'we' group, the less you will be inclined to engage in humiliating behavior or exclusionary behavior or discrimination against someone who does not look exactly like you.

SLM:

So, a 'we' group that is broader than a single category?

PE:

Sure. And you know, even when parents have given bad examples you can also take this as the kind of leadership you do not want to imitate. Those things can be done without any big revolutions. They are not about putting people in jail; they are not about shaming people. They are just efforts to providing a better example. Of course, much can be done at an institutional level as well, by actually protesting – by boycotting a certain product or a certain TV network, which are careless about these things. Boycotting a certain program that engages in entitlement racism.

SLM:

That was also the point with the Women's March. It started as a small idea, but ended up as a huge worldwide activist protest. They had never anticipated that it would become this big.

PE:

And this is a very nice example of action across categories. It started with two women – one in Hawaii and one on the east coast, I believe, of the US – who discovered that they wanted to do the same thing. Women needed to do something, women needed to march. And they were two white women if I am correctly informed. But at a very early stage, they realized the march would not be really good and impactful if it was only a one-category thing – that is, if it involved only white women. So immediately they reached out to be more inclusive, realizing that inclusiveness among women meant, among other things, more color. With more color and more backgrounds, you also bring in specific issues often not recognized as (white) women's issues, like racism, immigrant status. These experiences are as relevant as gender or cannot be seen as separate from gender. As a result, the march developed into a really broad agenda. But up for improvement still. The other month I got invited for a talk about entitlement racism and gave as an example how the Women's March movement had functioned differently in making coalitions. However, some participants in the audience questioned the movement's inclusiveness – one example pertaining to the deliberate exclusion of issues relating to Palestine. I felt shocked and very disappointed. At the same time, I don't think this discredits other ways in which the march could be inclusive, including a range of issues – the environment, race, poverty, disability. There were so many people involved in the movement who could unite around the fact that we are all worthy human beings. So, it was very broad, though not sufficiently so.

SLM:

It's interesting that you say this, because there was a quite a lot of criticism afterwards about it being very white. Did you hear that as well?

PE:

I did, but at the same time that was not altogether true. I think there were some things around the way it started that weren't really acknowledged. It started around the quote unquote 'pussy' thing, and when Trump was making these remarks, he surely wasn't thinking about black pussies, he was thinking about white pussies. And few, if any, white women pointed out that the issue was racialized. The

dimension of race that was involved was sort of circumvented because of the segregated lives throughout US history. And it would not have made it better either if Trump had meant black and white 'pussies'. But it raised a degree of resentment among certain black women, who said, 'Yeah, now suddenly you can protest, but when it was about "Black Lives Matter", where were the white people?' It is not altogether true that no white people were involved – there were sympathizers and empathizers. But it is also true that police violence, directly and indirectly, is affecting the lives of many, if not all, black women as partners, mothers, grandmothers and not in the least as targets of police violence themselves. It wasn't taken up among white women as a feminist issue, as a women's issue. But it [Black Lives Matter] *is* a women's issue, because of the devastating impact of racism on black women and their communities as a whole and there has been a lot of police brutality against black women adapted to the fact that these were women and not men – involving groping and inappropriate sexual behavior and what have you.

SLM:

Yes, and it was interesting how the pussy hat went from being a sign of activism and rebellion to being a sign of repression and whiteness.

PE:

Personally, I wasn't enchanted by the pussy hat, but, ironically, in racially segregated US, there was the unspoken normativity of white privilege, that is white pussies to be selected worthy of being groped. Although a very dubious privilege.

SLM:

At the end here, I want to ask you about intersectionality. You talk about it very indirectly, as an intersectional term. Because you talk about racism, sexism, Islamophobia, homophobia, etc. – you even mentioned entitlement sexism at some point in this interview. So, in what way would you say that entitlement racism is intersectional?

PE:

It depends. Let me take a step back first. I continue to feel less than comfortable with the term intersectionality. In a policy sense, I have no issue with using it, because in that context it is not a scholarly concept, it is a frame to acknowledge that gender has other dimensions to it. For example, gender is a diverse gender and is not a white gender and policy makers should act accordingly. That much is clear. When it comes to conceptual thinking, the very notion of intersection suggests having arrived from different routes, as if they are separated and, whoops,

suddenly they meet. And even though the literature has become more nuanced over the years, the very term brings us back all the time to the idea of originally separate categories. I feel more comfortable with a whole-person approach. Now back to the phenomenon of entitlement. It has something very masculine about it – the sense of self-importance. And men – or earlier, boys – are often socialized to feel more important than their sisters. Even feminist women fall into this trap somehow, when they allow sons to challenge them and to seek their limits more so than girls because boys are boys and you just don't want to have that fight. Too many boys grow up with the idea that 'I can do everything I want'. I mean, the quintessential example got rewarded big time. He ended up in the White House with behavior tolerated or applauded by too many, because he is male, because he is a *white* male. The sense that you are entitled to do all these things because you want to, is very strong in the socialization of boys. Then there's the assumption that care – that caring about another person – is a soft, feminine, hence less valuable trait, which brings in a gender dimension as well. Being sensitive to the needs of others is another so-called soft trait associated with femininity. Not surprisingly, any survey or other research that has crossed my desk throughout the years, involving gender comparison for participation in or support of fascist ideas scores significantly higher among (white) males. The notion of class is part of entitlement theory as well, because if you grow up with clear limits to what you can afford financially – and if the ceiling is low – you learn from early on that not everything is possible, that you have to be careful in your consideration of what you do with your money, and that there are other people who have more than you. Growing up with class pain can contribute to sensitivity to other forms of social exclusion that hurt. At the same time, economic deprivation might not make you sensitive at all, when conspiracy myths, populism, orthodox and homogeneous environments create Others as enemies. You may feel threatened, convinced that 'they' are stealing your job, for example. Neither does a middle-class upbringing necessarily create less sensitive people. So, class can work in different directions. But the whole idea of entitlement, of claiming your right, is based on a middle-class experience. The very notion of rights is more accessible to the middle class than it is to the quote unquote lower class or economically challenged classes or the formally less educated people. And of course, there are layered assumptions to the way entitlement racism is expressed. Comparing a black person to a monkey, as happens a lot in Europe, as I also wrote about in the article on entitlement racism (Essed, 2013) implies two things. First, that the life of a monkey is not important at all – that human beings are way more important than animals and that Blacks can be treated as animals. Related, and importantly, that one can ab/use animals to serve the needs of human beings (animals of a higher order). Much, although not all of this can be traced back to religion: The Judo-Christian tradition or philosophy that animals are less than human beings. Note, that I am not saying

just bluntly that animals are the same as human beings. That is not the case. Yet, to preserve so many things as the privilege of human beings only, and not of other animals, is not fair. It is not just, and it has led to a lot of destruction of nature, of the environment, and unnecessary suffering of animals, etc. So here that dimension comes in. Unpacking what happens in the name of racism reveals that there are multiple entitlement dimensions involved. It is not just racism that happens, but at the same time a number of other elements are being reinforced. In my article on cloning the physician (Essed and Goldberg, 2002), I try to unpack this relatedness of entitlement. I did not yet recognize it as entitlement there – entitlement theorizing came later to me – but I was close with notion of society's privileges or preferences – what I call the preferred categories, the preferred values, the preferred traits and the preferred characteristics. These preferred attributions are more generously associated with masculinity and even more when combined with whiteness and with high education and high economic status, even more when associated with the Christian religion, with being European, and so on. It is a whole package. You cannot just tease race out. You know the whole package starts to move if you pull and push what you think is only race.

SLM:

Yes, I really like that – especially as how you formulated it makes intersectionality a term that becomes unnecessary or even superficial. I mean, it cannot capture the complexity of what is in the term 'entitlement racism'. Because if you try to capture all these facets, you will decrease their impact or their value. They become less important, in a sense.

PE:

Yes, and it was a very nice question you posed, because it also allowed me to see more clearly that entitlement as such is very classed, gendered, ability based, and so on. I mean, many categories are already in there when you read that through race as entitlement racism. Although it can feel as the opposite of everyday racism, it is not. Entitlement racism is on its way to becoming more mundane, more everyday.

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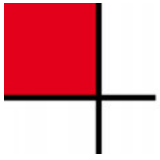
Speaker's corner: A comment alongside Essed

Martin Parker

On the north-eastern edge of Hyde Park in central London is a place called 'Speaker's Corner'. Since the mid 19th century it has been a place which symbolizes free speech, the ability to express opinions fearlessly, to stand on a box and shout the truth to the people. And the crowd which gathers every Sunday to listen can shout their opinions back again, frothing at the mouth with fury, laughing at the lunacy, tutting in English disapproval, or quoting the bible with staring eyes as they maintain that the world is going to hell.

The British judge, Lord Justice Sedley, in his 1999 decision in a court case concerning some evangelical Christians preaching in the street, decided that:

> Free speech includes not only the inoffensive but the irritating, the contentious, the eccentric, the heretical, the unwelcome and the provocative provided it does not tend to provoke violence. Freedom only to speak inoffensively is not worth having. What Speakers' Corner (where the law applies as fully as anywhere else) demonstrates is the tolerance which is both extended by the law to opinion of every kind and expected by the law in the conduct of those who disagree, even strongly, with what they hear. (Redmond-Bate v Director of Public Prosecutions, 1999)

There is a Speaker's Corner in the Netherlands too, the 'Spreeksteen' in the Oosterpark in Amsterdam, and it has hosted speakers from the far right, no doubt people who felt entitled to express their racism.

On the day that Philomena Essed spoke at Copenhagen Business School I was asked to respond. This short piece is a version of my response on the day to her arguments about the intersections between everyday racism and the right to speak. It seems apposite then to begin by asking 'who speaks' in this essay?

Perhaps it's me. Martin Parker, a free individual with the right to speak. At Speaker's Corner, and by extension the rest of England and perhaps the Netherlands and Denmark too, I am entitled to say what I want, as long as I don't provoke violence. This is my privilege, my due, my birthright. I have the liberty, licence, dispensation, leave, warrant to say what I want. I have an exemption, an immunity, an indemnity. I have been given permission, as a citizen of this place, this democratic country. Who are you to stop me?

And there is the paradox, because all these words suggest that my freedom to speak is granted by someone else. My 'right' to say what I want depends on a social context, on an agreement embedded in customs and laws. My rights are not simply mine, but they depend on others. Indeed the etymology of right comes from ideas about governance – as in the right of kings, divine right and so on. It derives from *regula* in latin, 'a straight stick' (in English still also called a 'ruler') and in turn from an old indo-european word for movement in a straight line. A body that moves through space in one direction, in a line, without deviation. In *De rerum natura*, written some 17 centuries before Newton, Lucretius had suggested an original state of being in which the universe was populated by many objects travelling in parallel straight lines through infinite space (1951: 60 *passim*). Is this what the entitled imagine they are? Self-propelled atoms, ruled by themselves? Not affected by the opinions of others? Allowed to stand on a soapbox and shout their opinions to the birds?

That being said, there is something really important about Speakers' Corner, and I don't want to suffocate it by being clever. The power of the idea of free speech, however offensive, is related to some much wider senses of freedom too. If I can say what I want then it implies a freedom from coercion, from the arbitrary excesses of kings, sovereigns and their lords, popes and their hypocritical clerics. People were burnt at the stake for their beliefs, crushed under huge stones, had their tongues cut out. This is why liberty matters, and it is not an idea that should be swept away in the name of avoiding offence. As Isiah Berlin expressed it, this is 'positive' liberty, the freedom to practice your religion, to trade, to hold dissenting beliefs, to be a protestant, to vote for who I want to (Berlin, 1969). To say that this is a human right, that we are all humans and that we all have the same rights, is a powerful idea. So free speech seems to be a really important element in liberal democracy, related to ideas about individuals and their capacities to dissent, to be critical of an established order, even to criticize the idea that free speech does not mean that you can say whatever you want. The very idea of a critical essay on 'entitlement racism' requires the entitlements that it argues are racist.

This might seem like a paradox, or a criticism, but it isn't. This is largely because the term 'free speech' is not a description of social ontology, or of law and justice, or even of everyday practice.

Ontologically, what we know (in our age of the 'social' sciences) is that we humans are indivisible. What we understand as being human is always collective, relational, entangled. Individuals are never islands, they never move in straight lines, unaffected by the fashions and opinions of others. Language, money, markets, cities, organizations, subjectivity, identity and are all co-produced, made together in exchanges of meanings and materials. Ontologically then, since rights are produced by collectives of human beings, they are also relational, never absolute, never simply mine but always ours.

Practically, rights have never been absolute anyway. The rise of the language of rights is parallel to the language of law, of the restriction of rights under specified conditions. The idea of rights is intimately connected to the nation state, to a mode of governance over a territory which monopolizes the means of violence, as well as the conditions for speech and silence. This could include the termination of life, or curtailing freedom of movement, and of course the freedom of speech in the case of libel, treason or hate speech. In fact, you are not actually free to say anything at Speaker's Corner. People have been arrested for obscenity, blasphemy, inciting a breach of the peace, or even insulting Her Royal Majesty the Queen of England. Silly old woman.

But we don't even need social ontology or a history of the nation state to make this point. In everyday terms, we almost always adjust what we say and do to prevent offence or present a good image of ourselves. Absolute truth telling is not an obligation, which is why we have the concept of the white lie, or the very many strategies which are used in polite conversation to avoid offence. If asked whether a particular piece of clothing makes the wearer look fat, or if a present was appreciated, it is a good idea to respond with some regard for the sensitivities of the person asking the question. If you don't, you won't have many friends.

In many ways then, the abstract idea of 'freedom of speech' is always qualified, the speaker is always cornered. Indeed, the phrase is a sort of oxymoron because any speech requires agreement on the form of life – language, institutions, custom – that allows any speech to make sense. Speech is always collective, a relation. It always has a speaker who modifies their address in the anticipation of the response of a person or group. And all the people in this relation have genders, sexualities, ethnicities, ages, body shapes as well as Judith Butler's 'endless and embarrassed' etc (1990: 143). Importantly also, given that Philomena Essed's talk was delivered in the hallowed halls of a business school, speakers often speak from or through

institutional positions – as politicians, scientists, employees, journalists, managers, artists, academics, managers, trade unionists, citizens, dentists and airline pilots. In short, all speakers and listeners are always already located, embedded, entangled.

Freedom, in the sense that it is used by those who demand their entitlements, implies the idea of a sovereign individual, someone self produced, standing on a wide open plain, shouting their opinions to the wide world with no fear or favour. You have no right to stop me! It's an attractive conceit, in a way, but (as the English metaphysical poet John Donne put it) no man is an island, we are all part of the main. And many people are not men.

So, lets ask again, who speaks in this piece then?

Me, Martin Parker. Man, heterosexual, middle aged, middle class, cisgender, white British, professor. That person often demands the right to speak. Indeed, that person has more rights than he knows what to do with. Where to eat, where to go, where to work, what to write, what opinions to express. Smugly, and ignorantly, he is the King of History, and he demands the right to say things that many people tell him that he cannot (Parker, 2001; 2018). But of course he is actually someone located in history, in the institution of the university, in the rich cowboy town of the Business School. Any rights he has have been granted to him by institutional locations, which means that his rights are not 'his'. Rather they are assumptions located in his station, in the fertile intersections that make his demands to speak so immodest, so demanding.

And so here, at last, I begin travelling alongside Philomena Essed's complaints. The defence that 'it is my right to', would be better expressed (ontologically, legally, practically) as 'do you grant me the right to?', because if you do not, I have no right. There is no right. Its just a way of making demands, of insisting on doing something that someone else might not want you to do. As if human beings were like atoms with the right to carry on going in a straight line, regardless of who they bump into, what collisions and what hurt they produce.

Now this isn't to say that 'Martin Parker' won't sometimes cause offence, or take offence, because speech is always potentially political, in the sense that it involves claims that can be contested. Following Chantal Mouffe (2013), the different interests of participants in any context are what produces the inevitability of 'the political' as the ground of social life. I will sometimes disagree with Philomena Essed, that is inevitable, but I will not do so because I am entitled to do so. Rather, the question should, I think, be posed in a different way. Who do I ask about my entitlements? How do I ask about my entitlements? How can we begin to speak

about 'our' entitlements? And, finally, what sort of institutions and relations might help us have these agonistic conversations?

Michel Foucault puts this in quite similar ways, when describing his enquiry into the Ancient Greek concept of *parrhesia*, fearless or free speech, truth telling. Foucault steers clear of celebrating the individuals or societies that engage in that speech, and indeed into the nature of 'truth' itself, but instead positions his enquiry as one into a specific 'problematization'.

> Who is able to tell the truth? What are the moral, the ethical, and the spiritual conditions which entitle someone to present himself as, and to be considered as, a truth-teller? About what topics is it important to tell the truth? (About the world? About nature? About the city? About behavior? About man?) What are the consequences of telling the truth? What are its anticipated positive effects for the city, for the city's rulers, for the individual, etc. And finally: What is the relation between the activity of truth-telling and the exercise of power? Should truth-telling be brought into coincidence with the exercise of power, or should these activities be completely independent and kept separate? (Foucault, 2001: 169-170)

These, it seems to me, are the sorts of questions we should be asking about the entitlement to speak. They are not questions about rights, but about the institutions and relations that produce the conditions for our speech, both mine and that of Philomena Essed. Because the alternative to making rights relational is just to continue to assume it's just about a speaker, on the corner, me, entitled to say whatever the fuck I want.

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The one and the many: How threshold phenomena breach subject boundaries

Kirsty Janes

review of

Blackman, L. (2012) *Immaterial Bodies: Affect, Embodiment, Mediation.* London: Sage. (PB, pp. 209+xxv, £28.99, ISBN 9781446266854)

Introduction

'Immaterial bodies' explores how affect can change the way we understand ourselves as boundaried individual subjects. Affect can be thought of as the pre-conscious instinct or the intensity prior to conscious perception or representation. Blackman looks at liminal practices, *i.e.* those which challenge the threshold between the conscious and unconscious, arguing that we are not isolated individuals but both 'one and many'. Despite our singular embodiment she argues that our consciousness is 'distributed', and our subjectivity is produced through communal, inter-relational affective communication.

That we are both singular and multiplicitous is not a new argument – she refers often to James (1890) who called it 'the problem of personality'. Using previously underexplored works on parapsychology from Tarde (1902), Bergson (1920) and James in particular this book aims and succeeds in producing a genealogy of affective communication. As the title suggests she looks at how affect is mediated (or felt and understood) through bodies, technology and discourse. She brings together such seemingly disparate practices as voice hearing, telepathy, and intergenerational memory with television and radio communication, and weaves

them into a compelling argument for 'distributed consciousness' and the permeability of individual experience.

As Blackman tells us there has been a shift within social science from discursive to affective modes of analysis as a reaction against discursive determinism and disembodied detachment. However affect studies is far from a unified field, including contributions from neurobiology, psychology, and social and cultural studies. Blackman successfully brings together sources from across these fields to support her argument, although the sheer historic and disciplinary breadth combined with an often inaccessible style of writing can make this a challenging read. Minimal signposting means it is difficult to dip in and out of, however it is worth perseverance, offering a unique and fascinating analysis of 'threshold phenomena'.

In the next sections I outline the main themes within each chapter. Blackman starts by setting out her project and positioning herself within studies of affect, before moving on in Chapter 2 to explore the debates around willpower vs. suggestion and mimesis in explaining individual and crowd behaviour. Chapter 3 looks at parapsychological, or threshold, phenomena arguing that telepathy is simply communication at a distance. Chapter 4 engages with materialism and embodiment through neurophysiological arguments, whilst Chapter 5 looks at cultural studies based investigations of energy and rhythm in creating affective 'transmissions'. Finally Chapters 6 and 7 bring together voice hearing and intergenerational memory with neuroscience and epigenetics, and explore the trans-subjective nature of affective communication.

The neglect of affective communication

In the preface and Chapter 1 Blackman establishes her basic stance: firstly that affect theory is and needs to be transdisciplinary, secondly that it has neglected the liminal areas of experience which are those (not coincidently) associated with marginalised and othered identities, and thirdly that 'brain-body-world' assemblages involve both singularity and plurality meaning that the boundaries of personhood are permeable.

Parapsychological material in particular is shown to have been side-lined or even ridiculed by affective theory's use of the hard sciences of neurology and physiology to explore consciousness. She argues that telepathy, or communication 'at a distance', for example has been reduced to being understood as symptomatic of fantasy and irrationality, while neurobiological and psychological explanations of brain pathology or group hysteria are privileged. She doesn't dismiss hard science

or psychology, but approaches it critically. Indeed she uses biomedical evidence to demonstrate how the physical and social are entwined, citing the morphological example of the failure of a hand transplant due to it being experienced as monstrous, thus demonstrating how individually and socially we are fearful of the 'other', and how we guard our singularity and resist inter-corporeality.

She is equally critical of the trans-human focus of Deleuzian influenced affect theory, which sometimes displaces the subject entirely. Bodies become understood as unstable assemblages which can include the human and non-human, for example the capitalist exchange system (Clough, 2007; Haraway, 1991; Massumi, 2002). However she uses this theory which challenges bodily integrity to demonstrate that 'distributed embodiment' [9] means consciousness is not just within one person. At the same time she is clear that affect is an intensity experienced in our material bodies which both requires and produces a subject. The 'immaterial bodies' of the title therefore refers to the collective affective production of the one through the many.

Although this book is part of the 'turn to affect' Blackman doesn't dismiss the discursive. After all exploring the boundaries of the self is not a dissimilar or exclusive project to that of the discursive. However she suggests that whilst the individual cannot be reduced to psychology and biology, neither can communication be reduced to representational practices of language or signification. Instead she looks at how affective, non-representational, intangible and immaterial means can be used to engage with the boundaries of subjectivity. Continuing from her previous work (Blackman, 2001; 2007; 2008) the affective modes which she is particularly interested in are those of voice hearing, spiritualism, and hypnotic suggestion.

Without engaging directly in notions of identity and identity politics Blackman highlights the systematic othering that is visible in studies of affect, habit and suggestion, such as women and ethnic minorities lacking willpower or character, as well as the gender relations involved in the side-lining of telepathy as a practice carried out by women unlike the showmanship involved in mesmerism. She notes that the affective and instinctual realm has been reduced to those who are othered (e.g. women, children, and animals), arguing that suggestibility has become reconfigured as will. Those who succumb to media influence for example are seen as dumb whereas rationality and intelligence are seen as able to overcome any susceptibility. She outlines how there been a historical trend to create hierarchies of people, and both a lack of will and animal behaviour has long been attributed on the basis of race, gender and class, with willpower and individuality the preserve of the white male middle-classes.

The one and the many

This next chapter introduces one of the central themes in the book, that of automatism, and what she calls the 'habit-will-suggestion-instinct' assemblage. The argument being examined here is how we account for crowd or group behaviour. That is, whether we are suggestible and crowds or sociality produce affect, or whether crowds just provide a place or time at which we are susceptible to existing forces. She uses historical writers like James (1890) and the more recent work of Leys (1993) who argues that there is no self prior to mimesis (or the mimicry of others) to argue that social influence or suggestibility shows how the self is distributed across other actors and agencies.

The dynamic of will and automatism particularly in the form of habits and personality underpin much of the later nineteenth and early twentieth century literature discussed in this book and, she argues, is present but unacknowledged in current debates. She draws on both historical and current writers to look at 'contagion' or how affect has been seen to spread in an animalistic fashion as bodies imitate each other. She shows how this historical view of personhood as a battle between will and the instinct meant collective suggestion in the form of affect was seen as primitive or uncivilised. As part of the making of social psychology hierarchies were imposed, elevating 'order over disorder, will over feeling, and the human over both the animal and ethereal' [34]. Boundaried individualism, she argues, is therefore a construct and a mode of control.

As Blackman illustrates the power of affective commitment, or the intangible intensity produced through (human) interaction, occurring in images, songs and slogans is used in crowd manipulation. There is an opening here, which she recognises but doesn't explore herself, to pursue affective processes in social movements. The false separation of the affective and discursive are highlighted here, as non-cognitive affect is co-produced by the discursive 'milieu' (which she looks at in Chapter 6). The points she raises are not only relevant because of the topicality of Occupy for example, but are imperative because (as she notes) neo-liberalism masks questions of will and control with rhetoric around choice.

In this chapter and throughout the book, she documents the historical division between voluntarism or willpower and anti-intentionalism or understanding responses as instinctive, habitual and uncontrollable, as well as the accompanying dualism of mind and body. However her point is not to engage in that debate per se but to use it to suggest that we need to explore how mental will or physical inhibition are produced and disrupted through affective means such as instinct, memories, senses and motor automatisms.

Communication at a distance

Having established through Chapters 1 and 2 the question she seeks to explore, namely: how can we conceive communication and subjectivity if individuals are understood as having distributed embodiment, in Chapter 3 she begins to look at immaterial or affective communication via altered states of consciousness such as telepathy.

As already noted parapsychology has been devalued and made fantastical through its alignment with the 'other', the imaginary, the magical or the freakish. As social psychologist Wetherell notes (2012: 160) seeing communal affective practice as uncanny, odd, eerie or weird is not helpful in understanding the 'waves of feeling' associated with affective phenomena. However by placing the emphasis on the prefix '*tele*' meaning 'at a distance', Blackman makes a convincing case for psychic or affective communication as simply an activity that collapses boundaries between individuals. This study is interesting in that she aims and achieves the normalisation and de-sensationalisation of those experiences which are seen as abnormal, yet paradoxically affect theory's very focus frames them as intangible and mysterious and inexplicable.

She covers wide ground in this chapter from James' (1902) investigations of mysticism and suggestion, and Mesmer's (in Riskin, 2009) hypnotic mesmerism to Guattari's (1995) pre-verbal intensities. Using Peters' (1999) study of affective communication, she argues it to be both material and immaterial. When radio was introduced, for example, at one and the same time it appeared both supernatural but also able to touch people as the intensity and suggestibility of affective communication are felt in and mediated through the body. As well as the 'uncanny' Blackman notes how printing presses, radio and television all appeared to defy the boundaries of the self/other, the living and the dead, and operate in 'invisible registers'.

New materialisms and the mind/body dualism

One of the issues Blackman identifies is the ongoing dualism of mind/body or mind/matter. The historical literature's focus on mentalism, modern neuroscience's focus on the brain and the new materialisms of affect theory reinforce this dualism. She presents concerns with both psychology where the body is docile and neurophysiology where the mind is reduced to anatomy, but equally argues that contemporary affect theory is equally affected by reductionist materialism. For example affective theorists such as Massumi (2002) and Thrift (2004) draw on hard science to focus on the 'half-second delay' in cognition.

Despite these existing links between science and cultural theory, they use very different terminologies. Neurobiology and psychology understands affect as pre-conscious instinct prior to cognition, whereas Deleuzian influenced social and cultural theorists including Massumi (2002) talk in more processual terms of the intensity of 'becoming' and their concept of immateriality doesn't even necessarily require humanity. Blackman aims to bridge these gaps in perspective. She does this by arguing affect to be both pre-individual and trans-subjective. That is to say she shows how affective transmissions or parapsychological phenomena, cross both boundaries of the conscious/unconscious as well as the individual/many.

Through her focus on affect as a process encompassing the mind *and* body, the self *and* others, Blackman seeks to draw bridges between the immaterial and material, and enrich neurobiology with the complexity from discursive, cultural and social. However at the same time as she tempers the reductionist materialism of neurobiological affective theory by subjecting it to discursive genealogical analysis, she is not uncritical of the discursive. Not only does affective analysis bring back the body, as Clough (2007) also argues, but Blackman brings back the psychic mind too. This is not the distanced, cognitive, and representational discursive mind but a 'brain-body-world' assemblage which is emotional, experiential and interconnected to others through liminal practices.

Blackman uses the liminal or psychic to suggest that historical concepts such as habit or instinct are not simply singular trans-historical constructs. In this fourth chapter she returns to issues of will vs. automatism, outlining the radical relationality of Tarde (1902) who set out a utopian society with no barriers between minds, and contrasts it to the anti-mimetic turn of social psychologists like McDougall (1910) through which normative subjects became boundaried and make conscious choices. Her exposure of the historically based marginalisation of affect as purely a question of civilised will vs. suggestibility means everything from intuition to voice hearing is valid rather than medical evidence of illness, insanity or delusion.

Rhythm and intensity

Clough (2007) has already noted that affective theory's origins in psychoanalysis mean a focus on the importance of repetition, such as the proposition that we repeat traumas and have bodily memories at individual and trans-generational levels. Much of the book revisits the debate over repetition as instinctive or social, and how they cross in the liminal. In Chapter 5 Blackman demonstrates how individuals are both part of wider rhythms such as cultural or governmental practices and yet can also be a 'singular host' to patterns such as depression and

mania, further emphasising the sociality of affective communication rather than the singular biological individual.

Although the term 'affective transmission' is used by some affect scholars (Brennan, 2004), Blackman rejects transmission along with contagion as it implies affect is singular and then parcelled up. She argues 'it is not that affect or emotion is simply "caught" or transmitted between subjects, but that subjects get "caught up" in relational dynamics that exhibit a psychic or intensive pull' [102]. She again questions how the materiality of neurophysiological explanations, such as pheromones influencing transmission, reduces affect to biological processes. Instead she turns to Laing (1970) to emphasise how individual rhythms are part of wider patterns. Laing's 'knots' and 'tangles' show how rhythms overlap, change and are far from simple repetitions, and how affect is mediated through wider intangible relational webs.

For all its immaterial production Blackman doesn't deny, in fact she argues that, affect is mediated through physical bodies and experienced as emotional and bodily intensity. Following a fairly distanced and analytical investigation of materiality in the previous chapter, here she turns to intensity. Examples of 'outsider art' and 'in yer face theatre' are used to emphasis affect as embodied, experiential and most importantly energetic.

She returns at this point to affect as a spiritual and creative 'becoming' that pushes at the thresholds of individuality and sociality. In particular she identifies that mania, mystic or drug induced ecstatic states became a focus of research. Those individuals marginalised on the basis of mental health, psychopathy or degeneracy hold a particular fascination for affective theory as they are seen as having a breach in bodily and mental function, such as Guattari's (1995) interest in psychopathy as a creative becoming. Again this exploration is critical – noting the romantic and gendered analysis of creative mania in the mid twentieth century. Blackman herself questions why such practices have an 'affective force or psychic pull' to scholars, suggesting by way of Foucauldian cultural theory that we aren't fully aware of the relational dynamics in which we are located. This forms part of her own reflexivity. Even for Blackman, though she is clear to avoid pathology, those phenomena breaching normative bodily and mental function offer a glimpse of the liminal.

Trans-subjectivity

In Chapter 6 Blackman uses examples of automatism (such as automatic writing) as well as hearing voices to identify how we operate at different 'registers of

experience'. She presents a combined analysis of voice hearing and intergenerational shared memory using the concept of the 'diasporic unconscious', that is to say the transfer of affect across space and time. She draws on her own history and work with hearing voices as well as Cho's (2008) Korean diasporic and voice hearing experience to show how embodied practices such as art, theatre and dance as well as voice can act as carriers of intergenerational histories and trauma. This breaks down the barriers between the individual and social, showing that affect is trans-subjective – a manifestation of our shared unconscious.

The will/suggestion duality remains central to her investigation – individuals who hear voices have been seen historically as having a split or double self, divided between the animal or 'other' and the civilised. She notes how this analysis links into wider cinematic and literary culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and its fears of possession and control by the 'other'.

This notion of divided attention, where the individuals' actions might be guided by a secondary personality, or agency, is further explored through historical automatic writing experiments by Solomans and Stein (1896). These experiments looked at what can be produced when the mind's attention is elsewhere, and Blackman argues that these, along with Cho's work on intergenerational memory, show the importance of our milieu in shaping our attention and consciousness. Although affect is usually thought of as a non-conscious process connecting bodies (Venn, 2010), Blackman in this chapter shows the virtual inseparability and reciprocity of the processes of cognition and affect, as well as the permeability of the boundaries between the one and the many.

Bicamerality and neuroscience

Chapter 7 turns to neuroscience and psychology to explore the notion of the bicameral or double brain and affective transfer within and between individuals. She moves to examining our 'interiority' and the threshold between consciousness and the unconscious.

In particular she focusses on Jaynes' (1976) 'bicamerality' theory which, although now largely ridiculed, suggests that around 3000 years ago humans developed from having consciousness based on brain separation, where the right brain hemisphere guided the left brain hemisphere, to our current state of self-consciousness. He suggests this would account for residual voice hearing. Although she does note some voice hearers find the book helpful, there are concerns with this theory, not least of which is the dehumanisation of historical

and present voice hearing individuals as unevolved. She neither agrees nor disagrees per se with the theory, although she notes how it supports her argument that voice hearing is neither about suggestibility nor illness. This chapter develops her key themes about the interconnectedness of the one and the many and of affect and cognition, as she argues the bicameral brain is based on interdependency rather than separation.

Jaynes' work appears here as just one part of the genealogical analysis in which Blackman looks at how neurological models of right/left brain division have dominated twentieth century psychology. As she shows the double or two-sided brain appears to have emerged from a need to explain apparently unconscious actions, yet became tied into notions of civilised will/animalistic suggestibility which still continue in notions of the rational/creative left/right brain.

She goes on to present more nuanced and recent neurological work on stokes and memory, to make her point that the brain produces different modalities of consciousness. Not only can some stroke patients experience disassociation and synaesthesia but may be able to write even if they can't speak. She contrasts this complexity of experience with the pathologisation that occurs through anatomical explanations of voice hearing as a localised, medicalised brain dysfunction in the brain hemispheres.

The focus of this chapter is to explore our 'interiority' or the lived singular experience and to challenge the ongoing separation of affect and cognition, but as well as challenging divisions within the individual, she challenges division between the one unified individual and the many. She ends this chapter by demonstrating how sociality is active in producing the affective body, arguing affect is a coproduction between individuals and their milieu, such as media and consumer culture. She points towards new areas which support more affective understandings of communication, such as the study by epigenetics of transmission and enactment across generations.

It is a challenging task to combine work with different scientific and cultural paradigms, without losing the detail of both and making meaningless generalisations, and I found myself wondering what a neuroscientist might make of some of the arguments. Although slightly more introduction and contextualising of more recent work on bicamerality might have been useful for social scientists Blackman succeeds in demonstrating the permeability of the self/other.

Conclusion

In this slim but densely packed book Blackman makes a compelling argument for engaging with those 'registers of experience' that are overlooked in trans-human based affect theory or the purely neurological or psychological understandings of the pre-conscious, as they allow us to connect with non-representational, non-conscious intensities of experience. Her project of exploring affective communication, or those practices which bridge the threshold of the conscious and unconscious and 'the one and the many', requires us to account for where the boundaries of individual subjectivity lie. Works which invoke materialist and relational ontologies, each of which makes assumptions about pre-existing processes and selves are skilfully combined and the tensions inherent in corporeality explored in this book. She makes a good argument for a greater dialogue between neuroscience, critical psychology and cultural studies as well as with historical texts.

What spoke to me wasn't so much the detailed ins and outs of the interrelations of historical and neurological affect theory, which I have barely scratched the surface of here, but the broader contextualising of liminal or psychic processes as historically othered, and her rehabilitation of 'threshold phenomena' in demonstrating affect as a relational, embodied and immaterial production.

Despite the challenging nature of some of the material and its presentation I found the argument more illuminated when presented through the wide range of examples, such as the historical detail of Gertrude Stein's involvement in studies of automatism. However many examples, such as the section on synaesthesia could have been explored in more depth and at more length. I also wanted this book to produce some of the affective transmission, that as she notes is difficult in an academic register, but which has been so successfully produced in fiction such as Sarah Water's (1999) novel *Affinity* where desire and the psychic intermingle, but this sort of rhythm was lacking.

Having said that, as an academic text it effectively unpacks areas neglected by discursive theory. The Foucauldian discursive background can be seen in genealogical analysis, the interest in power relations, and the focus on the production of the subject, yet she is not rigid in this. She uses the discursive paradigm to explore affect, which produces insightful commentary. She notes how bodies are often seen to be 'dumb matter' in discourse but equally she's questioning of the anti-intentionalism of affective theory based in neuroscience in which responses are hard-wired and automatic. By looking at how the individual is affectively constituted through intangible 'processes of life and vitality which circulate and pass between bodies' [4] she challenges the dominance of

psychological and anatomical explanations which rely on boundaried ontologies of the self. Singularity can be lost in the focus on multiplicity in affect, but that is not the case here. Using the notion of a permeable threshold, between the conscious and unconscious and between the one and the many, to denote when the subject is open or closed to other phenomena or affective flows provides a way of still seeing personhood. In this study the individual and their experience matters.

One final point – although an appreciation of power relations underpins this book, in the exploration of affective communication as a mode of control and way of 'othering', it is only in the epilogue that she links affect to the current political climate of neo-liberal capitalism. Yet it is here that the contemporary relevance of her work becomes clear. She argues that we valorise autonomy and self-determination not automatism, the psychic or liminal in our neo-liberal culture. Echoing Malabou's (2008 cited [187]) concerns over how neuroscientific discourse naturalises the way we understand capitalist labour as based on flexible and adaptable units in its modelling of brain 'plasticity', she highlights the politicised nature of perspectives on affect. She refers back to Malabou (2008), who asks 'what should we do so that the consciousness of the brain does not purely and simply coincide with the spirit of capitalism?' (*ibid.*) Blackman's suggestion is twofold and reiterates her main points: firstly to become more consciously aware of the unconscious, and secondly, to challenge singularity and embrace our psychic connectivity as both the one and the many.

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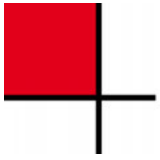
Education of and for the 'post-apocalyptic': How Britain discarded women technologists and lost its edge in computing

Toni Ruuska

review of

> [...] our problem is *not that we are fools* in need of enlightenment. Rather our problem is that *we lack the power not to be fooled*. (Allen, 2017: 103)

Ansgar Allen's (2017) *The Cynical Educator* is something different. Relying heavily on Nietzsche and Foucault, Allen writes fiercely but of stylistic fashion. No hope is given, nor is it longed for. The book 'was not written for applause' [8]. While it is not an easy read, the reader is not left stranded to wallow in postmodern ambiguity, and while no systematic or definitive answers are provided [7], one is able to find at least some foothold.

Allen asks, why the belief in progress – if not the belief in the entire modern Western culture – is faltering, and still the belief in education, as a redeemer, remains so strong and pervasive among educators? However, this is not quite the case, as Allen is keen to reveal. Quite on the contrary, educators have become cynics, rebels without a cause [123]. Yet, if contemporary cynicism is widespread, and not only among educators, it is hard to detect [103]. Allen argues that this is because modern cynicism lacks conviction, and accommodates itself to the status quo it at the same rejects [105].

Instead the present-day apathy, cynicism with a lower case 'c', Allen is calling for a militant Cynicism, hoping to revitalise the legacy of Diogenes and his followers from historical damnation. Allen writes:

> This book takes aim at you and me, at our cynical attachments to education and the educated person. It unearths the teacher within us. It confronts us with our disavowed cynicism only to affirm them. It traces the origins of everyday cynicism by locating the rise of cynicism in the fall of Western education. The romantic educator – the last bastion of the Western educational experience – is now falling from grace, though with a death rattle that may last decades still. Education is under attack more than ever for failing to deliver on its promises, but rarely doubted itself [4].

In same cases in *The Cynical Educator*, it is the usual story. Modern education has been knocked down, and corrupted by various powers raging from all-round commodification, instrumentality and 'neoliberalism', but unlike most would claim, for Allen, the situation is already 'post-apocalyptic' [91]. In this sense, it seems that Allen is trying to grasp his own sense of bewilderment, which he thinks is widely shared among educators: 'there is a suspicion I believe educators feel, if only fleetingly, that the educational endeavour which occupies and exhausts them could itself be rather absurd' [177]. Despite of this, it is peculiar why the belief in educational good is not renounced as well. Indeed, this seems to be one of the reasons why this book has been written. In Allen's own words:

> This book takes aim at the conceit of educated people, in particular those educated educators in the business of educating others. They believe an educational good to exist and defend it against attack. Despite all corruptions the inherent goodness of education is believed incorruptible. This conviction will not be abandoned however much education is debased, reduced to the status of commodity, or instrument for 'getting ahead' [12-13].

Allen traces the roots of the belief in educational good to Socrates, and then follows the evolution of this belief from Plato to Aristotle, and then to Rome and to the breakthrough of Christianity. Among other things, Allen claims that our schools are still today bothered by the educational figure and scheme of Socrates, in which the meaning of one's existence is tied to an experience of doubt and promise that education would be its overcoming [19]. The 'belief in the promise of education', is to Allen, 'a prerequisite for one's subordination to it' [19]. Moreover, Allen remarks [20] that 'the best pupil in such a scheme is he who is most easily seduced by education, he who already believes in the educational good promised by the educational encounter'

In Platos's dialogues education is also modelled by Allen as a relationship that demands trust and deferred gratification [20]. Interestingly, Allen argues that because of this trust and because of deferred gratification, education has

functioned so well as a belief system, not because it actually delivers in the end, but because it does not. For Allen, education is not based on a promise of success, but on a promise of failure. For one to succeed, most have to fail. As he writes:

> As we forever attack schools for failing to come up with the goods, for failing to deliver the salvation they promise, we refuse to see how the school has been more catastrophically successful than any cathedral; not in offering us salvation, but making us forever beholden to that offer [71-72].

In contrast to ancient Greek, in Rome the 'philosopher educator' is turned to 'educator philosopher', meanwhile educators 'offered counsel from positions directly subservient to power being dependent upon their patrons for support' [34]. After this, the next great educational turnover occurs when the educator philosopher is replaced by the Christian bishop, as the Western 'soul' becomes the property of Christian theology [41]. Allen argues that we, in fact, owe a lot to the Christian pastorate, because its logic of power (shepherd-flock) still defines the subjectivity of Western educators, as 'it binds the educator to his pupils by committing the educator to a project of mutual redemption' [64].

Concerning the belief in educational good overall, Allen claims paraphrasing Nietzsche that the 'educational beast' in us wants to be lied to. We want to believe that education 'can be genuine and morally pure [...] where good intentions become synonymous with good deeds' [22]. Because without this belief, Allen confesses, the mundane violence of education would be too hard to bear.

Allen believes that our modern cynicism is the result of our inability to change our ways: 'we have been schooled too well and too long to unlearn our lessons without struggle' [19]. As a way forward from our current impasse, Allen thinks Diogenes and Cynics are to be consulted. Allen reminds us that Cynics were once eccentrics, who made fool of social convention and attacked the values and aspirations of civilised life [86]. This type of Cynicism has left only tiny fragments to our modern cynic attitude. From pre-modern to late modern, there has been a transformation from scandal to submission, and from ascetics and animality to general sense of disenchantment and apathy [120-121].

As we learn from the book, although it is likely that ancient Cynics would have denounced Western education, they were not antagonistic to the idea that one tries to understand the world in which one lives. Like Allen remarks, Cynics were merely 'suspicious of the common prejudice that the world is best understood by adopting the conventions of rationality endorsed by a particular philosophical school' [111]. More generally, the Cynics criticised the culture surrounding themselves by stripping life to its bare essentials, this way questioning the worth

of refined customs and conventional attitudes surrounding civilised beings [120-121].

The most amusing if not troubling section of the book is the part where Diogenes, the headmaster of Cynics, is brought back to our times. Allen writes:

> He [Diogenes] gets caught up in two world wars and numerous other conflagrations, genocides and massacres. He strolls through the principal sites of capitalism and communism watching the former expand through a series of aggressive cycles and the latter undergo the most brutal implosions. He eventually stumbles forth into the political apathy of our present that no longer dreams of changing its conditions of existence. He witnesses how our most progressive contemporaries confront their own century of ecological and social catastrophe by purchasing ethical beans and aspiring to pious reservations of 'carbon neutrality' as they, and we, befoul the rest of the planet. And in the midst of this cynical disorder Diogenes finally encounters education, and is surprised to hear a repeated promise, that through education 'all can achieve success'. Whilst Diogenes had taught: 'Be ready for everything', what he now sees goes beyond comprehension [125].

The quest of Diogenes gets even trickier, as he inevitably must face the tyranny of capital. With resignation, Allen points out that the embodied practices and ascetic way of life of the Cynic would be most certainly interpreted as just another lifestyle choice within the boundaries of our liberal and individualist culture [126]. Allen writes:

> Feverishly promoted by capital: To Be Yourself, to the exclusion of all others, authentic to the point of nothing, to the point of destruction in the face of such impossible responsibilities, is the modern ultimatum. [...] Our bodies, our tastes and inclination, have become objects of training, therapy, adornment and 'free' expression. These bodies exist as cultural and counter-cultural projects, requiring continual inspection, adjustment and readjustment. Our lives have been invested with a quest of enrichment, alteration, for new experiences, new trends [126].

The dilemma of Diogenes is of course the same dilemma that we encounter everyday. How to resist a culture that is able to absorb and accommodate everything? Indeed, the only real choice appears to be its abandonment. Allen brings this issue up, but is not eager to follow the lead. Though, he mentions Paulo Freire and makes the case that critical pedagogue must get rid of his/her bourgeois existence, he maintains that a Cynic has always operated 'within' rather than 'outside'. This seems curious considering the general tone and argument of the book. For Allen, Western education is evidently beyond redemption, but he is nonetheless committed on staying on board and advising other Cynical educators to do the same. The questions is why the Cynical educator has to sink with the ship, or rather why the Cynical educator is committed to sink the ship differently, and not getting ready to abandon it instead? Or might the Cynic's fate be more tragic? Is the fate of the Cynic to stay on board and convince others to leave? If it

is, Allen does not explicitly say so, for the final third of the book is rather ambiguous and at times even arcane.

On the whole, *The Cynical Educator's* message is serious and urgent. However, the book is less a wake-up call than an exercise of self-reflection. It brings up contemporary educator's pains and sufferings, as well as contradictions and self-deception. If anything, one is drawn out to question one's convictions regarding education, and yes, whether one believes in the goodness of education or not. Allen's guidance on these matters is not gentle, but why should it be? After all, it is the task of the Cynic to shock and interrupt so the rest of us can recover from our slumber.

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