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Personal Trajectories of Participation across Contexts of Social Practice

Summary:

In discussions about basic theoretical approaches in a non-Cartesian psychology several candidates for a key concept were proposed, such as action, activity, relation, dialogue and discourse. None of these concepts, however, sufficiently ground psychological theories of individual subjectivity in social practice. To accomplish this we need to conceptualize subjects as participants in structures of ongoing social practice. In this paper I argue why and address issues of subjectivity as encountered by persons in their participation in complex structures of social practice. I introduce the concepts of personal conduct of life and life-trajectory as elaborations of my theory. And I discuss this theoretical approach and show what is at stake in developing it by comparing it to similar approaches in the current literature on the person, self, and identity.

1. Personal participation in structures of social practice

This paper has a dual background in my prior work. On the one hand, my prior theoretical work on the concepts of "subject" and "personality" led me to argue that theories of individual subjectivity must be developed on the basis of a conception of persons as participants in social practice (Dreier, 1993,

1994). On the other hand, concrete studies of participants in social practice – such as of clients' lives in and across the contexts of their family, work, school, psychotherapy sessions, etc. – made me realize how significant it is to ground a theory of the person in a conception of personal participation in structures of social practice (Dreier, 1996, 1998, in press). The primary aim of the present paper is to elaborate such a theory of the person.[1] I shall begin by summarizing four crucial arguments why we should adopt "participation" as a key concept.

First, to adopt "participation" as a key concept in a theory of the person means to conceptualize subjects as always already involved in social practice. If we acknowledge that individual subjectivity is based on the potentiality to realize action possibilities (Holzkamp, 1983), we must also admit that

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[1] This is an extended version of a paper delivered at the biannual conference of the International Society for Theoretical Psychology in Berlin 1997 as part of a Danish session (Dreier, 1999b; Forchhammer 1999; Højholt, 1999, Nissen, 1999). Frustration over the restrictions on presenting elaborate theoretical arguments even at a congress for theoretical psychology made me write it.

subjects encounter and realize these possibilities as aspects of social contexts of action in which they take part albeit perhaps in restricted, problematic and indirect ways. In fact, most human activity is only meaningful because it presupposes a common social practice of which it is a part and of which we have a more or less common understanding (Taylor, 1995a). This participatory dimension of subjects' activities is crucial to the quality of their relationships, their understandings, orientations, feelings and thoughts, and it is crucial for subjects to recognize and pursue this communality. In order to direct their activities subjects must, therefore, think beyond themselves from where they stand into the structures of social practice of which they are a part. And in order to understand subjects' actions, thoughts, and emotions we must study the ways in which they take part in social practice.

Second, the concept of participation theorizes individual subjects as always situated in local contexts of social practice and involved from there in primarily practical relations with social structures of practice. It urges us to consider subjects as particular parts of a social practice and to come to understand them by asking what it is they are a part of and how they take part in it rather than to theorize them as free-floating agents located nowhere in particular or above ongoing social practice in some ideational mediation with *the* community, *the* culture, or *the* society. This is the main difference between adopting participation as a key concept in a theory of the person instead of even closely related concepts such as action, activity, relation, dialogue, or discourse. It is not a crucial feature of these concepts to understand of which particular local social practice the persons are a part. The concrete location of individual subjects in social practice remains strangely implicit or ambiguous. While human action, activity, rela-

tion, dialogue, and discourse really are part of a particular local social practice, these concepts do not ground our comprehension of subjects in the social context in which they obviously are located and theorize them from there. Taken by themselves these concepts rather grasp the local practice they study as a free-floating interchange between people or with an environment.

Third, all individual participation is a partial and particular aspect of a social practice. To adopt the concept of participation as a key concept in a theory of the person means to comprehend individual action and psychological processes as partial phenomena in relation to a social practice. Individual participants have but a partial grip and influence on a social practice and a particular ability and knowledge about it. No individual subject is an omnipotent agent or covers it all. Individual subjectivity is a partial personal aspect of a social practice. But individual participants also play different parts in a social practice, often from different positions and with different scopes of possibilities, concerns, and obligations. So individual participants are also particular ones, i.e. diverse and not uniform members. They configure their participation in social practice in a particular *and* partial personal way. Individual subjects orient themselves and develop their particular abilities and qualities by being particular parts of social practices.

Fourth, the fundamental human duality between acting within the existing limits of a social practice and extending its scope of possibilities (Holzkamp, 1983) is grounded in a similar duality of modes of participation, i.e. of participating in the reproduction of the current state of affairs or of contributing to change it so that participants may extend their degree of disposal over the social practice. By the same token being critical of a social practice, at least implicitly, involves

an appeal to co-participants to ally in changing it according to the critique or leave it to join or found other practices. A critic does not stand outside all social practice, but participates in a particular way. Even an isolated critic fighting alone is not located outside social practice, but in particular relations of isolation and powerlessness in a given social practice.

When we comprehend subjects through their participation in social practice, we neither consider them to be well-bounded, autonomous units nor diffuse them into relations (Gergen, 1995, 1996) or dialogue "between people" (Shotter, 1996, p. 5) or positions in discourses. While we maintain that relations and dialogues are grounded both in their participating subjects and in the social practice in which they take place, we also see individual subjectivity and social practice as related by grasping psychological phenomena as personal aspects of the structures of social practice of which these persons are a part. Like the concepts of action, activity, relation, dialogue, and discourse this conception proposes what Harré (1998), using a Wittgensteinian terminology, calls a grammar of active powers as opposed to a grammar of (inert) substances and their qualities. But unlike most psychological theories which conceptualize human action by means of purely or primarily individual properties, it argues that human actions and their psychological aspects must be grasped as particular parts of social practices (cf. Schatzki, 1997).

2. Social structures of practice

One reason why theories about the person did not conceptualize subjects as participants in local contexts of action is that by and large social theory also played down the concrete locatedness of social practice and favored other approaches to the structure of social practice.

> Especially under the influence of nationalist ideas (social theorists) developed notions of societies as singular, bounded, and internally integrated, and as realms in which people were more or less the same. On this basis, a great deal of modern social theory came to incorporate prereflectively the notion that human beings naturally inhabit only a single world or culture at a time. (Calhoun, 1995, p. 44)

If this really were so, society would be some sort of container that holds and influences all members in the same way, the relationship between individuals and social structure would be uniform, all members would be basically uniform individuals, and *the* social structure or *the* culture would be uniformly present everywhere in individuals' lives.

But social practice is not homogenous. It consists of diverse, located contextual practices which are linked in a social structure. To capture this, we need a theory about the social structure of practice as a set of interrelated and diverse, local social contexts of action.

> (T)o consider the spatialization of life is to fill out the context(s) of social formation – our daily and institutional practices, in all their situatedness. (Liggitt & Perry, 1995, p. 3)

My main purpose in this paper is not to elaborate a theory about the structure of social practice with its diverse and interrelated social contexts, but to unfold a theory about the person. Therefore, I shall only point to some crucial features which we will need to unfold a theory of the person. Obviously, particular local contexts – homes, workplaces, etc. – may be institutionalized in various ways, and they are often structured for particular primary purposes and concerns and marked by particular power relations of unequal scopes of personal participation. In relation to a particular social context we

may focus on the practical interrelatedness of participants' actions in some particular constellation of actions which reproduces or changes the common context in a particular way. And we may consider how some constellations of action reach beyond the present social context and obtain influence on the practice of other social contexts as well.

Since social contexts are particular parts of the structure of social practice, no context can be understood by itself though contextual practices are mostly studied in this way: one at a time, in isolation, as if the context were an island. A social context can only be understood through its interrelationships – connections as well as separations – with other contexts in the structure of social practice. Social contexts depend on each other in particular ways for their reproduction and change. And they refer to each other, sometimes in problematic ways. Educational contexts, for instance, refer to other social contexts for which they supposedly educate particular modes of participation, and they give directives about what should count as a qualified mode of participation in those other places.

For a social practice to be reproduced or changed it must be so arranged that subjects realize some of these interrelationships and come to be able to use them. And when individual subjects configure their participation in these contexts and direct their trajectories across them, they must take the structuring of social practice in particular contexts into account. They must also rely on the existence of intercontextual structures to achieve many of the ends they pursue. The concrete meaning of a particular context for them in many ways depends on its interrelationships with other contexts in the structure of social practice and in the structure of their own personal social practice.

A theory about structurally interrelated social contexts makes us consider in which

particular ways particular contexts are involved in the structure of social practice and in which particular ways subjects encounter and address particular aspects of this structure through their participation in particular contexts. It makes us focus on the structuring of social conditions as contextual arrangements for participants' social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Social contexts are arranged for particular social practices and particular modes of participation. Particular groups of participants have access to them or are excluded from them in particular ways. And social contexts may be arranged for particular trajectories of participation in them and through them, e.g. by virtue of an internal structure of divisions and stations or an array of social contexts for the unfolding of personal life-trajectories with transitions and changing constellations of personal social practice and configurations of personal significance.

Compared to earlier historical times, present social practices are less confined to particular places and limited areas. Places and practices are more interlinked. People – not only information – move around in them and through them. This historical shift is mostly celebrated as an abstraction from place and interpreted as the negation of being bound to a place (e.g. Giddens, 1991). But what we actually see are interlinked local contextual practices partaking in more comprehensive practices and people moving around in them and across them creating direct and indirect links between these practices for themselves and others. To think about this as a uniform relationship between local practice and *the* overall structure is not accurate. Local practices are related to the overall structure in varying ways depending on which comprehensive influences make a difference in them and on the particular comprehensive reach from them.

Numerous social theorists go along with the abstraction from place which Giddens holds to be characteristic of modernity (1991, p. 146). They confuse being situated with being situation-bound and argue for the rise of a "disembedding" from place which they conceptualize like the well-known notion of abstraction as a detachment from any particular place into an ideational nowhere. In so doing they lose sight of the fact that individual subjects always act in a situated, embodied way from definite time-space locations as participants in local social contexts – even when their actions reach across translocal or global, definite or indefinite time-space distances. Whatever we may think of the process of globalization which overwhelms many of these authors, and regardless of how much some subjects travel around the globe, it does not follow that subjects' personal social practice really is global. On the contrary, it keeps on being situated in and across particular locations, i.e. translocal, no matter how scattered the particular locations in which subjects take part.

On the whole social theorists do not conceptualize boundaries and diversities in the structure of social practice in primarily practical terms. They see them as primarily functional distinctions, based on the division of labor, institutions, etc. When they analyze the personal significance of participating in a particular context, they, therefore, subsume it to the societal function that they presume the particular context fulfills. Even a theorist of social practice such as Bourdieu categorizes and defines social fields (art, economy, power, etc.) according to the different functions they are assumed to serve as units in a division of labor (e.g. Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Thereby he subsumes the significance of the socio-spatial arrangement of social practice and of members' participation in it to a secondary and derivative status. Some theorists try to move away

from a kind of social theory which is dominated by a notion about an overall sociostructural determination. One example is Strauss (1993) who tries to achieve this by introducing a concept of social world. Yet he does not define social worlds as an interrelated set of places for participating in the structure of social practice, but merely as groups of people with shared commitments to certain activities, with shared resources and ideologies. Social worlds have no places in the world, it seems. It doesn't matter where these social worlds of groups and their interactions are located and which particular relations they have to the structure of social practice. Other theorists conceptualize social practice as a duality between an overall system and an everyday lifeworld (e.g. Habermas, 1987; Holzkamp, 1983) with matching bipolar modes of practice and understanding (Kleinman, 1995). But "the everyday" is certainly no longer, if it ever was, one homogenous world in which immovable persons are located. Such an abstraction prevents us from unfolding a differentiated theory about the structures of personal social practices in and across diverse social contexts.

In and around psychology notions about context are becoming more widespread. But they are not clearly directed at conceptualizing the structure of social practice and subjects' situated participation in it. Instead the concept of context functions as a placeholder for the lack of a systematic grasp on the relationship between persons and structures of social practice. For instance Markus & Herzog characterize "the relation between the individual and the social world" by stating:

> Each person is embedded within a variety of sociocultural contexts or cultures (e.g., country or region of origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, family, birth cohort, profession). (Markus & Herzog, 1995, p. 39)

They simply list a number of diverse phenomena which are not integrated into a systematic theoretical understanding of social practice. The list rather continues the tradition of homogenizing all sorts of social diversities in the way role theorists shuffle all sorts of differences into roles or the psychology of variables mounts all sorts of arbitrary variables. Another example is Burkitt who criticizes social constructionists of the Wittgensteinean branch (of whom he mentions Harré and Shotter) because

> ... their theories tend to stop short of a study of the contexts of linguistic practice and remain firmly within the bonds of conversation. ... (T)hey have not yet been able adequately to theorize the practical contexts in which language and conversation may be enveloped and developed. In contrast, what I am suggesting here is that because there is something beyond the text, a social context in which language and texts play their part, then these are equally important in the way that selves are formed and also conceptualized (Mead, 1934). People are located not just in texts but also in social relations and practices: the elemental forms of 'context'. (Burkitt, 1994, p. 15)

Burkitt ends up abstracting social context from its local materiality and dissolving it into social relations instead of taking the study of language into local social practices as Hanks (1990, 1996) does.

3. A complex subjectivity in a complex social practice

In the first section we argued why we must conceptualize individual subjects as participants in a local social context with particular positions, social relationships, scopes of possibilities and personal concerns for them. The second section shows why we need to complement this notion in one important respect: In the social structures of modern societies subjects take part in more than one social context of action. They participate for longer or shorter stretches of time, on a regular or one-time basis and for various reasons in a diverse set of social contexts. In the conduct of their lives they move across these contexts. Personal social practice is translocal. Hence we must recombine categories of psychology and social theory so as to conceptualize subjects as participants in structures of social practice. A theory about subjects in social practice must conceptualize how subjects become able to manage to take part in heterogeneous social contexts. It must include subjects' changing personal modes of participation and diverse potentialities. It must replace notions about an abstract, individual agency with a contextual understanding of their personal modes of participation and potentialities. And it must consider a complex and varied personal social practice to be enriching and not only a burden, in contrast to traditional theories of the subject which, if they do at all acknowledge multiple personal participations, implicitly assume that it is a burden for subjects not to live a simple life in one homogenous world (Dreier, 1993).

As subjects move across contexts, their modes of participation vary because these diverse contexts embody particular positions, social relationships, scopes of possibilities, and personal concerns for them. Hence they must act, think, and feel in flexible ways. Their conduct can be no mere execution of schemata, procedures and rules. Subjects rather need to interpret and locate standards and rules in order to include them in concrete situated action (Taylor, 1995b), and a subject's behavior often gets its meaning by intentionally differing from such standards. This presupposes that subjects are basically able to relate to their social circumstances and discourses in various ways, to exert influence upon them, to be critical of them, to contribute to their

change, etc. (Holzkamp, 1983). And it calls on us to theorize subjects' changing modes of participation and diverse potentialities. Theories of personality mostly operate with notions about a fixed internal structure of traits, goals, life plans, needs, or the like while we need to conceptualize complexly changing subjective structures in structures of social practice. Most personality theorists also insist that individual integration or coherence is the basic hallmark and achievement of personality, selfhood, and identity. But they do not convincingly ground the practical necessity, possibility and reasons for this basic need and achievement (Dreier, 1993). They rather stipulate it. Certainly subjects need to relate their various practices and concerns for primarily practical personal reasons, but that does not necessarily entail that they reach a complete personal integration or coherence. Such a stipulation underestimates the complexity of personal social practice and the robustness of those social diversities which give subjects good reasons to participate in diverse ways and lead multidimensional lives. It can, therefore, come as no surprise that such a state seems easier to imagine in others whom we admire, blame, or don't know too well and harder to recognize in ourselves.

In their present context subjects participate in a particular way compared to their modes of participation in other contexts. This is because that of which they are now a part and their position and personal scope of participation are different. Their concerns also often differ from the ones they direct at other contexts. In fact, some concerns they usually pursue in particular places and not (at all or in the same way) in other places. To participate fully in the present context also presupposes suitable abilities for its particular social practice and knowledge about its organization into social positions, modes of access and exclusion, distribution

of authority and tasks, arrangement of normal procedures, as well as about concerns of other participants to be taken into account.

But the particular way subjects configure their participation in the present context does not depend on that context alone. Since social contexts are interrelated in the structure of social practice and since subjects conduct their lives by taking part in several contexts, these interrelations and subjects' concerns in other contexts matter to them. Their reasons to participate in a particular way in the present context are also related in various ways to their concerns in other parts of their lives in other contexts. Their local modes of participation are thus not only grounded in the immediate context. Subjects may even do what they do in the present context in order to achieve certain ends or changes in another context. Often subjects have something on their mind in the present context which they need to pursue and want to pursue across contexts. Many concerns can only be realized by being pursued across contexts, utilizing possibilities which cut across and bridge contextual boundaries of time and place. Still, while subjects pursue these concerns across contexts, their modes of pursuing them change because their contextual scopes of participation change and/ or because other features of these concerns matter more to them in other contexts.

When subjects address comprehensive concerns and issues from a particular context, their involvement is not complete and all-covering. It is a particular and partial one. After all, comprehensive issues do not have the same impact in diverse contexts, and these contexts are not implicated in the comprehensive issues in the same way. In locating and configuring their involvement in comprehensive issues subjects, therefore, need to consider the particular reach of their involvement if they address the issue from the present context as compared to from

other optional contexts, and they need to consider that others may be addressing similar concerns and issues from other contexts, in common, different or contrary ways.

When subjects move from one context into another, their structure of personal relevance changes. Which particular structure of social conditions matters for them depends on their present location. Strauss (1993, p. 42) suggests that we construct a conditional matrix to depict the whole structure of social conditions for, say, a particular person from the narrower, more directly impacting conditions to the broader, more indirect ones. But, I would argue, that structure only remains the same as long as the subject stays on a fixed location. As soon as the subject moves into other contexts, the matrix would have to be redrawn. The idea of a fixed matrix of structural conditions presupposes an immovable subject or homogenous world. Likewise, which social relations would be direct and which indirect (Calhoun, 1995) shifts as the subject moves into other places. Social relations can only be direct in relation to a particular place, and they can only be indirect because they cut across places from a particular place.

Comprehensive social diversities, such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity, are encountered in different ways and have different meanings in different contexts. Their features appear and are addressed in varying constellations alongside varying other dimensions of meaning in different contexts. Co-variations of these features challenge and guide subjects to grasp how they are interrelated in complex configurations of racial, class, gender, and ethnic issues. It is relevant for subjects to grasp this complexity in finding out how to address these complex issues in particular contexts and how to achieve impacts on them in other times and places.

A contextual practice includes several participants on diverse positions with diverse perspectives on it. Their personal perspectives also differ because this context is a different part in their overall personal social practices, and because they pursue different concerns in it. Participation in social practice, of course, involves processes of understanding, orientation and coordination between co-participants in a particular social context and between co-travelers across them. The understanding between participants and the interpersonal dimension of personal understandings draw upon the basic possibility of understanding others by putting oneself in somebody else's place, that is, by transposing one's perspective onto their location and position. What is more, contextual practices and particular participants' positions in them become contested because they are riveted by various social conflicts and contradictions. The diverse perspectives and conflicts may both complicate understandings and propel a better and richer personal understanding of the context and of individual participants' part in them.

All this in no way eliminates the need for the personal "dialogues with oneself" which we call reflection. In fact, dialogues between people in many ways feed personal dialogues and vice versa. For a variety of reasons the complexity of personal social practice calls for varied, complex and multidimensional personal reflections. Persons' multiple participations and concerns call on them to address the interrelationships between them. They must relate, weigh, balance off, and contrast their diverse participations and concerns in their complex personal social practice. And they must reconsider and reconfigure them as they move from one context into another. Because their participations and concerns are interrelated, this involves complex probings of realities and self-understandings.

Such personal reflections unfold by relating diverse experiences from diverse participations in diverse times and places. Our personal experiences and our reflections upon them are part of a multifaceted personal social practice. Indeed, the very multiplicity of participations in diverse contexts allows us to reflect on their commonalties and contrasts, and these reflections on commonalties and contrasts enable us to reach broader and richer understandings of the complex interrelationships in social practice and in our personal social practice. In other words, it is not primarily experiences from within one context, but particularly the varied and diverse experiences from diverse contexts that fuel our personal reflections. Being a full participant in one context, in fact, easily makes us overgeneralize our understanding from that context onto other contexts. After all, contextual practices are diverse, they rest on diverse premises, and we pursue diverse concerns in them. Being a full member of one particular practice makes us understand that practice, our own concerns, and other practices from our position in that context. We then easily forget what it involves and what it feels like to take part in other contexts of a different kind. This peculiarity of being a full participant in one particular context in a social structure of heterogeneous practices indicates that it is significant for our understandings and reflections that we take part in several, diverse contexts and that comparisons across these contexts play a significant role in our reflections.

Often there is also a kind of "core blindness" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) associated with (mainly) being a full participant in a particular context so that we easily take for granted and no longer see particular key premises and functionalities of that social practice. We may break with this core blindness by participating in other, contrasting contextual practices and by contrasting and comparing experiences from these diverse positions. In some sense the concept of core blindness plays a similar role in a contextual theory of social practice as the concept of habitus does in Bourdieu's theory of social practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). One important difference is that in a contextual theory of social practice the cross-contextual diversity of personal social practice allows persons a leeway of reflection and change in relation to their core blindnesses which remains ambiguous and doubtful in Bourdieu's overarching culturalist notion of habitus, and that there are several, distinct and interrelated, core blindnesses in the social practice of the same person and in a given society.

We cannot complete our personal reflection once and for all, nor relegate it to a particular – secluded – place. The heterogeneous, changing, and interrelated qualities of personal social practice makes persons reflect in different times and places triggered by the complexities and variations of their personal social practice. These personal reflections are a part of our personal life-trajectories (see section 4 below). They are intimately and variously related to our orientation and realization of our participations in structures of social practice. In the course of our trajectory of participation we re-flect, i.e. re-consider, re-evaluate, and re-configure our participations and concerns in the changing composition of our personal social practice in and across varying constellations of social contexts. We also re-flect and re-configure our primary concerns in relation to those of others in hitherto un-re-cognized ways. Phenomena and events are recognized on the basis of changing premises so that other aspects of meaning and other possibilities and interrelationships are foregrounded.

Dialogues between people and with ourselves may be related in problematic ways, but basically spur each other on. There is a common feature to both of them on which they both rest and thrive: They work by contrasting and comparing transposed perspectives though this is often not recognized in theories about internal dialogues. In both we see and compare things from different locations in personal social practice(s). In this sense Calhoun points to Bakhtin's understanding of the modern novel as

> ... a reflection of a human capacity to carry on an interior dialogue, indeed the constitution of the human being through this dialogicality. (Calhoun, 1995, p. 50; see also Holzkamp, 1995 and Leudar, Thomas, NcNally & Glinski, 1997).

Our approach to reflection takes it back into complex personal social practice in life-trajectories and allows us to conceive of personal and interpersonal reflection and dialogue along similar lines. In neither case is reflection a distancing from the world, but seeing things from the perspectives of different locations and positions, be it my own perspectives in other contexts or others' perspectives in our common or other contexts. In contrast to this understanding of reflection, its classical root metaphor draws on the separation between manual and mental labor, on thinkers secluding themselves – in barrels if need be. It assumes that 'gnostic distance' (Holzkamp, 1983) is the condition of possibility for reflection. In our analysis to be at a distance rather means to be somewhere else, not outside of everything in the privileged nowhere of pure thought – a notion which would blind us to the social qualities of knowledge and its part in social practice. Diversity of practices and perspectives replaces distance as the key condition of possibility for reflection. The interrelatedness of practical diversities allows us a notion of reflection which unfolds on an horizontal axis, so to speak, and not on a vertical metaphor of a higher level lifting itself off the ground of practice. The second order volitions, assumed by a split level theory of the self (Frankfurt, 1971), do not constitute a fixed level in a stable hierarchy, but a complex and shifting constellation of contrasts and comparisons which may lead to generalizations based on perspectives from local participations.

I have argued that we need to theorize how subjects compose and structure their complex personal social practices. They do so in the structures of their ongoing social practice with its relations to specific others, specific commitments, specific places, specific organizations of rhythms of activity, etc.. In order to accomplish this, subjects must develop and adopt personal stances on what they take part in, do, and want. They must find premises of action which reach across and relate their participations in different times and places. They must make up their minds so as not to trip themselves and each other up in their diverse participations and concerns and, thus, get stuck or prevent the achievement of other important ends. Such stances may, of course, be more or less clarified or confused and more or less ad hoc or long-term. To adopt stances also means to take sides in the conflicts and contradictions of social practice.

The development of the frame of analysis I present in this paper led me to distinguish between personal locations, positions, and stances (Dreier, 1993, 1994). By location I mean the particular place in the world where a subject presently is in a particular context and from where the personal perspective reaches into the world. It marks the concrete situatedness of personal practice. By position I mean the particular social position which a subject occupies in the present social context. Evidently, both location and position change when the subject moves

into other contexts. If we only operate with concepts about locations and positions, however, we lose theoretical grounds for addressing issues about how subjects relate to these locations and positions, weigh and balance them off, make up their minds and take sides on issues concerning them, affirm and critique them, and contribute to reproducing and changing them. We are left with an impersonal and deterministic notion of subjects in social practice. To allow us to reflect these personal aspects in theoretical terms we need a third concept of personal stances. By stances I mean the standpoints a subject comes to adopt on its complex personal social practice, on that of which it is a part, and on its participations in it.

This concept of personal stances is not tied to a particular, homogenous practice out of which a particular set of perspectives are generalized into particular personal standpoints. On the contrary, it is grounded in the complex, heterogeneous, and contradictory character of personal social practice. Stances are elaborated by contrasting and comparing understandings and orientations from diverse local participations and concerns. These understandings and orientations are re-flected, re-considered, and re-combined. In this way particular understandings are generalized which orient the person's participation in its complex personal social practice in and across diverse social contexts. Stances are grounded in the person's complex and diverse participations, and directed at orienting the person's participations in and across – more or less comprehensive reaches of – social contexts. Stances do not (primarily) rest on some – imported – pre-given higher grounds. Making up one's mind and taking a stance rather occurs by relating and comparing on a shifting set of premises taken from the very same components which are thus related and compared. The generalizing of stances is composed,

and the relating and comparing of contrasts play a key role in their identification.

Stances develop and sustain an orientation for subjects in the structures of their complex, ongoing, personal social practice. This concept emphasizes the practical anchoring and consequences of personal reflection. Stances are first of all necessary precisely because of the complexly heterogeneous character of social practice and of persons' participations in it. They rest on and guide a person's multiple involvements in multiple practices with crosscutting concerns and issues of an often conflicting and contested nature. The development of personal stances, therefore, draws on the existing interrelationships between social contexts in the structure of social practice. As we pointed out in section 2, particular contexts depend on each other and refer to each other in the structure of social practice. Subjects need to consider these dependencies and references when they configure their personal modes of participation in and across them and when they unfold their selective personal realizations of contextual participations. They have to make up their minds on how to take part in these interrelated social contexts and relate their participations in them. In so doing they may become critical of particular ways to relate these practices, and turn into critical members of or withdraw from some of these contexts. Still it is not possible to integrate all diversities of social practice into a personal standpoint. The diversities persist in the structure of social practice, and it may be important and necessary for the person to take account of and sustain diverse qualities in its personal social practice. The person may have to balance them off in ways that bracket one or the other pole of such diversities. But often it is, indeed, the very existence of contrasts which gives each of the poles their particular personal significance and qualities to be sustained.

In diverse social contexts personal stances are pursued by means of different modes of participation. They too are not generalized schemata to be executed rigidly in identical ways, but in ways fitted to the contexts in which the person is presently located, to its relations to other relevant contexts, and to the modes of participation of other co-participants. Thus, stances guide persons in their transitions between diverse contexts so that they may reorient themselves and redirect their activities according to their concerns in the present context, but also so as to keep on pursuing particular concerns and stances across contexts. Stances guide subjects to act flexibly without turning into chameleons.

Let me round off this section by pointing out that my argument concerning the concept of personal stances or standpoints is similar to Calhoun's critique of Dororthy Smith's feminist standpoint theory (e.g. Smith, 1987) when he states:

> The core idea of standpoint theory is that a determinate social structural position will create conditions for learning from experience that will be epistemologically privileged in producing certain sorts of knowledge. ... On the one hand, the idea of standpoint is rooted in the notion of concrete experiencing subjects. On the other hand, the idea of standpoint employs a categorial logic to analyze positions in social structure. (Calhoun, 1995, p. 171)

Calhoun points out that categories of observation and reasoning are thus abstracted from social structure and women's experiences essentialized, and he continues by quoting Harding:

> Some thinkers have assumed that standpoint theories and other kinds of justifications of feminist knowledge claims must be grounded in women's experiences. The terms 'women's standpoint' and women's perspective' are often used interchangeably, and 'women's perspective' sug-

gests the actual perspective of actual women – what they can in fact see. ... For a position to count as a standpoint, rather than as a claim ... we must insist on an objective location – women's lives – as the place from which feminist research should begin. (Harding, 1991, p. 123, quoted in Calhoun, 1995, p. 172)

Note that, according to Smith, standpoints are grounded in actual subjects, i.e. in located experiences, and that experiences are recognized to differ according to the socio-structural position which a subject occupies. But experiences seem to turn into standpoints already by virtue of the subject's occupation of a particular social position. It is as if a standpoint simply follows from occupying that particular socio-structural position and, thus, from being a member of a particular socio-structural category/population. The combination of experience and position seems to determine a standpoint. So Smith does not distinguish sufficiently between position and standpoint. This shows us what is at stake in distinguishing between them. If we do not draw that distinction, all persons who share a particular position, i.e. who are members of a particular social category of persons, are believed to adopt a particular common standpoint on social practice and their participation in it. But certainly diverse standpoints can be drawn from similar positions, among other things because everybody occupies multiple, diverse, interrelated and intersecting positions in the course of their personal social practice in the structures of social practice. Smith bypasses the important issue of how persons come to terms with interrelated and intersecting diversities by elaborating particular stances on how to conduct their lives in such social structures of practice.

4. The personal conduct of life and life-trajectory

Our arguments so far about complex personal practice in complex structures of social practice have a number of consequences for the elaboration of our theoretical framework. In this section we shall introduce two conceptual elaborations. We have emphasized that a life in diverse social contexts and across them implies a multifaceted, varied, diverse and contrasting personal practice which raises particular personal difficulties, challenges, and conflicts, but also provides practical resources for a rich life. These diversities and complexities can not easily be balanced off against one another, nor resolved once and for all in an individual synthesis as traditional psychological notions of personal integration and coherence would have it. On the contrary, everybody must develop particular skills to handle a complex life in diverse contexts and across them, and it calls for particular activities and abilities to manage diverse and interrelated participations and concerns across contexts. The complexity and diversity raises personal conflicts between one's concerns and participations in various contexts which intersect with the conflicts within specific contexts. These conflicts raise personal issues of critique and change and turn personal stances into dynamic ones, siding for or against change. Contradictions and conflicts play an important role in personal practice and development (Dreier, 1993; Holzkamp, 1983; Osterkamp, 1990) which most personality theories whitewash with their harmonizing notions about individual integration, coherence, a stable structure of goals, needs, life-plans, or whatever.

By presupposing a homogenous and unitary life traditional psychological theories of personality neglect the fundamental personal complexity of composing a personal social practice in diverse social contexts and across them (Dreier, 1993, 1994). Persons, in so doing, must relate their diverse participations in diverse social contexts, but these interrelations necessarily remain problematic since the diversities and conflicts of social practice and the complexity of conducting a personal social practice can not be resolved simply by forming a personal synthesis. The structuration of a complex personal practice remains tied to and can only be accomplished in relation to a complex, heterogenous, and contradictory structure of social practice. Issues related to these complexities call on the person to develop personal stances with which to relate various personal participations and concerns in order not, at one time and place, to act in ways which are blatantly harmful to one's concerns in other times and places and to one's overall social existence. But even though it is necessary to elaborate and pursue such stances, they too must be realized in diverse ways depending on particular concerns and possibilities, positions and constellations of participation in various contexts. We must, therefore, locate the foundation of personality in the structuration of personal participations in the structure of social practice.

We can now see that not only the issue of personal integration and coherence is at stake here. Persons are first of all faced with the practical problems of conducting a complex personal practice in complex structures of social practice. Such a complex personal life does not unfold in any simple and unproblematic way. Its movement does not, so to speak, take care of itself. It must be composed, and subjects must conduct it in various ways and to various degrees. It takes particular efforts to do so which are crucial to what it means to be a person living in a complex social practice. Indeed, we argue that we should ground our theoretical understanding of the formation and development

of personality in the necessities and challenges of participating in such a structure of social practice (Dreier, 1993). In this vein Holzkamp (1995) picks up the concept of "conduct of life" from the work of a group of sociologists in Munich (Jurczyk & Rerrich, 1993) and reinterprets it into a basic concept in our theoretical understanding of personality. It is argued that the complex structure of everyday personal social practice turns the development of a personal conduct of life into a crucial feature of what it takes and means to be a person. In a social practice with complex time-space arrangements and rhythms of activities persons must conduct their everyday lives by relating, ordering, combining, balancing off, coordinating, and contrasting their various activities in various contexts and with various others. How persons unfold their everyday conduct of life, of course, depends on their degree of influence on the social conditions and arrangements they live in and on the way in which they address and realize the challenges and problems of conducting it.

Of course, structures of social practice develop historically. Some sociologists argue that the change from traditional to modern societies involved a "pluralization of lifeworlds" which became "more diverse and segmented" so that "individuals typically move between different milieus or locales in the course of their everyday life" (Giddens, 1991, p. 83, with a reference to Berger, Berger & Kelner, 1974). In a similar vain, Jurczyk & Rerrich (1993, pp. 26-7) argue that we can observe historically increasing demands the organization of 1) time, 2) tasks, chores, and contents of activities, and 3) social relationships. This increases the demands which individuals face in their conduct of everyday life and which groups of participants, say the members of a family, face in conducting their life in common

along with other parts of their lives apart in other places. Some authors conceptualize these historically changing relations as a matter of more complex demands being placed individuals, and some conceptualize changing forms of individuality as if they were determined by these changed structures of conditions and demands. But such social changes mean more than that. They evidently imply changes in the forms of personal practice and in the abilities which persons need to develop in order to become full participants in such forms of social practice. So socio-historical changes call on us to re-address theories of the subject and forms of personhood with an historicized inquiry into of the particular qualities, abilities, and forms of personhood in historical forms of social practice in which issues concerning the development of a personal conduct of life have gained particular prominence and qualities. They also call on us to address a range of specific historical challenges and problems to being a person.

For instance, in complex forms of social practice it is deeply problematic in specific historical ways to have one's participation constrained to a small number of social contexts, or to have one's possibilities to pursue concerns in relation to some contexts so constrained that only one social context holds possibilities to pursue basically meaningful concerns. Often, then, even the participations and concerns of the remaining context(s) may lose their personal meaning because their personal meaning is bound up in a socio-structurally arranged composition of personal social practice which reaches across several significant contexts and holds possibilities to pursue important concerns in and across them. Just like contexts are not islands, personal participations and concerns are fueled by being interrelated in a composition of personal participation and concerns across them. The personal mean-

ing of participating in one particular context in important ways matters and stands out precisely because it is linked with and contrasts with the meaning of taking part in other social contexts with other qualities. Being excluded or constrained in relation to significant aspects of the existing complex contextual structure of social practice means to be personally constrained in crucial ways in relation to those forms of personal social practice which it is historically possible and meaningful to unfold.

However, a concept of the everyday conduct of life is not sufficient to theorize the basic complexity of personal social practice in the structure of social practice and the challenges driving the formation of personality. We also need a concept of personal life-trajectory to theorize how individual life-courses stretch across social time *and* space. Just as everyday personal social practice stretches across social contexts, so does the personal course of life. The flow of the life-course also has a spatial dimension to it. Across the life-span the person participates in a changing configuration of particular social contexts, and the person composes these changing contextual participations into a personal life-trajectory. In the course of this trajectory the person leaves some contexts behind, replaces them by others, and even the personal significance of those contexts the person takes part in on a long-term basis changes. Holzkamp (1995) characterizes the conduct of everyday life by an internal polarity between a set of cyclical routines for realizing what must be done and "the real life" rising from its routine grounds. But aside from this internal tension in the everyday conduct of life, its structure of contextual participations is not completely static. On the contrary, the everyday conduct of life is broken up and changed, among other things because it is involved in the life-trajectory of the person at a particular "point"

in its course. The structure of the everyday conduct of life changes as part of the changing structure of the life-trajectory, and the changing structure of the life-trajectory is brought about, among other things by changing the everyday conduct of life. The life-course, then, is not merely projected into the future, so to speak on an abstract dimension of time, but also across places of present and future participations that do not remain the same. The life-course is both thrown ahead and across. I chose the term trajectory to emphasize the neglected spatial dimension in this duality of projecting and transjecting.

As in the personal conduct of life, there is also a historical dimension to the composition of life-trajectories. Particular historical arrangements, such as the development of intimate, private forms of family life, influence the configuration of personal life-trajectories, their structure of meaning, and hence the structuration of personhood. In a historical perspective life-trajectories have turned into less predetermined and pre-shaped molds so that the fashioning of trajectories calls for more personal shaping, becomes more individualized, and calls for 'individual labor' (Jurczyk & Rerrich, 1993). This gives new weight and new qualities to the issues which surround the personal configuration of a complexly contextualized life-trajectory. Yet, social arrangements for evolving personal life-trajectories still exist, and observing how others unfold their trajectories in particular ways (plus advice from others) guides or misguides persons in how to realize their own personal trajectories. In other words, the unfolding of a personal trajectory is still arranged for in many historically specific ways.

For instance, school is a particular institutional context with a particular significance in the students' composition of a conduct of life across their various contexts which encompasses particular personal relation-

ships and meanings. At the same time, school is arranged for a particular population which is obliged to participate in it for a particular period in their life-trajectories. What is more, school is arranged for particular age- and track-graded trajectories. And through the students' particular modes of participation school polarizes them and the students polarize themselves. They adopt and develop particular positions and stances and stake out particular (pro- and transjected) life-trajectories for themselves in relation to the institutionally prearranged molds of educational trajectories and their presumed place and significance in personal life-trajectories. The students re-appropriate such existing institutional landscapes for personal trajectories to become particular vehicles in their composition and orientation of a personal life-trajectory (cf. Eckert, 1989). In so doing, they also use the arrangement of age- and track-grading to define where they are in their trajectories.

In institutional arrangements for trajectories transitions in life-trajectories with their necessary processes of personal re-orientation may also arranged for. These transitions must be accomplished in relation to the existing social structure of practice (cf. Højholt, 1999), and they may also be guided or misguided by observations of others and advice from others.

Some contexts are long-term parts in a person's trajectory while others are one-off places and still others are part of a person's trajectory for a particular period and then abandoned or replaced by new contexts. In this way the personal structure of participations across contexts changes during the life-trajectory. What is more, the personal meaning and concerns change in relation to particular contexts in which the person keeps participating. And so do the ways the personal participations and concerns are composed, ordered, distributed, balanced

off, and weighed in reconfiguring one's personal conduct of life across the current constellation of diverse contexts. The dilemmas and stakes of conducting a complex life-trajectory change along with it. If we look at the significance of a particular context and at the mode of participation in it, it too changes and is reconfigured through the life-trajectory. So particular contexts differ in their arranged scopes and relevances, and in which concerns and stances persons want to pursue in them and across them. All this furthermore depends on a particular context's place in that person's conduct of life and life-trajectory.

There are class, gender, and ethnic differences concerning which social contexts are accessible and used and concerning the spread or restriction of the constellation of social contexts in a personal conduct of life and life-trajectory (cf. Eckert, 1989). There are also class, gender, and ethnic differences in the ways in which persons combine or disconnect contexts in their configuration of social relationships and concerns. For instance, experiences with public institutions and authorities contribute to particular modes of disconnecting and linking contexts.

It should have become apparent by now that comprehensive processes of learning are involved in the unfolding and change of a personal conduct of life and life-trajectory. This learning is in principle unending and calls for many forms of reconsideration and re-learning, but we can not go into the topic of learning in this paper (cf. Dreier, 1999a; Lave, 1997). Instead we shall round off this section by pointing out that when persons project their trajectories from any given point in them, it is composed of a particular structure of participations and concerns. The sense of direction to a trajectory, therefore, has a particular cross-contextual complexity and composition to it. What persons mean by finding a direction to their lives, normal-

ly not only includes what they aspire to be part of in one context, but a particular "throwout" for a future composition of their conduct of life with attached modes of participation and concerns. When a person misses something or aspires to a change in his or her life, mostly what is involved is not only a change in one context. Directly or indirectly it is a change in the overall composition of personal practice with its inter-relationships between participations in various contexts, their relative weights and personal meanings. Likewise, what people mean by 'getting into a new situation' or by their 'life situation' encompasses the whole configuration of personal social practices and not just a particular context. The quality of "feeling collected and focused" as opposed to dissipated and confused is a crucial feature of such a form of life, and it is related to the personal configuration of a conduct of life and trajectory. We may, indeed, feel collected and focused in a complex personal social practice where many other things matter to us than the ones around which we feel collected. The spread and variation of participations and concerns may, of course, make us lose our grip on feeling collected. On the other hand, it may also be a precondition for feeling collected that there are a variety of participations and concerns in the background to make the ones we focus on stand out and be significant by virtue of there being others in the background. In between other pursuits the primary concerns which we feel collected around are then returned to, picked up again, time is cleared and opportunities sought to keep at them, advance them further, etc..

5. The life-trajectory, structure of personality, and identity

In the previous sections we introduced the concepts of conduct of life and life-trajectory. They pointed us towards a wide range of personally important phenomena and issues which have to do with the personal configuration of participations and concerns and their relative personal significance. And they indicate that it is crucial to recognize the contextual complexity of personal social practice in elaborating a concrete theory about the person. Subjects relate to their participations in different contexts in particular ways. Their engagement may be more or less long-term, crucial to them or merely instrumental, related to clearly limited or wide-ranging concerns, and include various bonds to particular others. Persons may be (formal) members of a context or come to see themselves as belonging there because of the nature and reach of their involvements. In other words, through the history of their participations persons unfold a particular subjective composition to the significance of their participations in particular contexts and with particular others. By relating their various participations, concerns, and stances persons gradually configure a particular subjective composition to the way they feel located in the world. It seems to me that this is what is meant by the term identity. The feeling of belonging to particular practices and with particular persons and places develops on the background of being part of them, reflecting on one's personal relationship to being part of them, configuring those reflections into personal stances and configuring those stances into a mapping of what one stands for and where one belongs (which is what we mean by identity).

In this section we shall compare our approach to a theory of the person through per-

sonal participation in structures of social practice, everyday conduct of life and personal life-trajectory with prevalent modes of theorizing the person, identity, and the self in the current literature. Theories of the person in psychology and beyond are traditionally dominated by basic assumptions about personality as an integrated and coherent unity. Most theorists conceptualize this image of the structure of human personality by disregarding the structure of the social world and social practice. They seem to consider it irrelevant for understanding the basic structure of human personality. Indeed, the preeminent function which psychological theories ascribe to personality, identity, and self is the subjective construction of a meaningful individual coherence and not the composition of a personal conduct of life and life-trajectory.

If the social world is considered in theories about the person, most theorists stick to the assumption that human personality, identity, and the self are basically about individual integration and coherence. The practical diversity of a contextually structured social practice is almost totally neglected in notions of personal life-courses, identity, and phases of development. Even in an activity theory such as A. N. Leontjev's (1973) the theoretically emphasized switch in dominant activity from play to learning during ontogeny just happens to coincide with the age of school entry. The switch in dominant activity is not theoretically grounded in the social arrangement of children's life-trajectories. This illustrates my critique the first in section that the concept of activity brackets that of which it is a part. Activity and participation do not seem to go hand in hand.

In different strands of theorizing about the person, abstraction from the contextual diversity of social practice may be accomplished by several lines of argument:

One line of argument assumes the existence of only one small, homogenous social world. This is mostly accomplished by reducing the world in which human personality is assumed to be constituted to the (historically constituted and thus not universalizable) nuclear family. The private shelter or individual retreat into private intimacy which is associated with this contextual form is considered to lift the person above the significance of "external" social determinants and positions. So even if these theorists are not blind to the world outside of the family, they may consider the significance of private family relations so pervasive that it alone provides for and guaranties an integrated and coherent identity. In this vein social theorists such as Giddens (1991) write:

> ... self-identity is negotiated through linked processes of self-exploration and the development of intimacy with the other. Such processes help create 'shared histories' of a kind potentially more tightly bound than those characteristic of individuals who share experiences by virtue of a common social position. (p. 97).

A second line of argument about the persons abstracted from the diversity of social practice does acknowledge that the social world is complex, but insists that it is nevertheless homogenous. Such theorists assume a social and/ or cultural coherence to the social world which either impinges upon the person or allows the person to construct a coherent personal standpoint. For instance, in referring to Dilthey's concept of "life" as an historical and biographical concept, Mos (1996) argues:

> Reality from the 'standpoint of life', as Dilthey would have it, is always one of vital involvement in the sense that our individual existence compels us to adopt a stance in and towards life thereby bringing meaningful coherence to our experience ... (p. 41)

Mos points to the

... pressing importance especially in a post-modern era of constructionist discourse that we recover a conception of the individual person not, in Dilthey's words, as 'prior to society and history', but as a 'point of interaction', as a participant with others embedded in those meaningful relational coherences of society and culture that from the standpoint of life are primordially lived. (p. 42)

He wants us to recover a

... sense of those societal and cultural coherences whose 'massive objectivity' both condition and are conditioned by our individual and collective participation in them. (p. 42)

According to Mos, then, diversities, dilemmas, and contradictions of social practice and of our personal participation in it seem to be of little import for the individual person, or can at least easily be overcome in the construction of an individual personality.

A third way to maintain that personality, identity, and self are all about individual integration and coherence is to emphasize that their structuration is a purely subjective accomplishment. Then the personal social practice and life-trajectory may be diverse and complex, but these diversities are overcome precisely by the individual construction of a personality, identity and self. These theorists thus oversimplify what it means and takes to achieve individual coherence. They consider it a one-sidedly subjective affair and not a basically practical one. Such a one-sided abstraction may be helped along by assuming that personal coherence is a matter of coherent meaning and not of the structures of personal participation in structures of social practices (which are then reduced to mere external practicalities of that which really counts). In this way the concrete significance of diversities and contradictions of social practice is downplayed, and the achievement of coherence is attributed to the subject as an eminently subjective concern and accomplishment. The

only psychologist in the group from Munich which studies everyday conduct of life provides an example of this type of theorizing (Behringer, 1998). She argues that a person achieves individual coherence through the individual construction of a personal identity. Even though she and the rest of the group study individuals facing different demands from different social contexts and refer to the development of a conduct of life as an individual necessity in such forms of divergent social practice, they all maintain that, thanks to the accomplishment of a personal conduct of life, each individual is able to construct its own coherent identity. There is a noteworthy historical shift at play in their combination of the concept of conduct of life and identity. The concept of conduct of life was taken up by Weber and a group of "reformers" to address a crisis in the forms of life around the beginning of the 19th century (Barlösius, 1996). And, like the more recent Munich group, they argued for the accomplishment of personal coherence and integration as a way out of the crisis. But while the Munich-group considers this coherence to be a purely subjective construct, achieved by the more recent notion of identity, Weber (just like later personologists such as Allport, 1961) considered coherence to be accomplished by adopting a philosophy of life, i.e., cultural and religious values while the other reformers were looking for a "natural" basis for conducting one's life in the right way. We see here that the more recently widespread notion of identity goes hand in hand with insisting that identity is an eminently individually subjective affair.

Finally, a fourth way to arrive at a notion of a coherent identity is to consider social space to be insignificant and theorize the personal life-trajectory merely in a dimension of time. In this way theorists downplay or disregard the diversity of social practice and detach the history and development of

the person from any robust anchoring in relation to (changing) social structures of practice and the complexly socially situated nature of personal life. Nevertheless, this is the all-pervasive approach in theories of individual life history. We even come across it in social theories which emphasize the concept of social action. Thus Giddens (1991) states that

> ... place itself is undermined by the expansion of disembedding mechanisms... (p. 146).

Behind this statement lies his interpretation that to be situated means to be situation-bound, thereby turning "situatedness" into what Holzkamp (1983) calls to be "immediacy-fixated". Although Giddens (like Asplund, 1983, ch. 11 & 12) picks up the concept of trajectory from the time geography of Hägerstrand where time-space is a concept for the interconnectedness of time and space, his notion of the abstraction of time and space and of disembedding and globalization makes him end up considering trajectories as merely stretching over the time dimension of an individual past-present-future. In this way Giddens loses the spatial dimension of the contextual infrastructure of social practice and of the personal conduct of life and life-trajectory in his theoretical grasp of personal life. In reference to a book, entitled "Becoming your own therapist", around which he grounds his argument, he then writes about the "... dialogue with time -- a process of self-questioning about how the individual handles the time of her lifespan" as the cultivation of a reflexive self-identity through self-observation (Giddens, 1991, p. 72). His concept of trajectory has turned into merely a matter of time:

> The self forms a trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future. (And) The line of development of the self is internally referential: the only significant connecting thread is the life trajectory as such. (pp. 75 & 76).

He defines life plans as the substantial content of a reflexively organized trajectory of the self (p. 85). Life-planning for Giddens is a way to prepare a direction in relation to the biography of the self. But in his understanding of planning, the contextual complexity disappeared in his analytic maneuvers so that he finally ends up claiming that

> ... self-identity, as a coherent phenomenon, presumes a narrative. (p. 80).

Coherence is reinstalled, by means of the creation of a narrative. But narratives are a subjective (and/or cultural) imposition of coherence on "unshaped" experience, of a beginning, middle and end to disjointed events in the plotting of a story and the construction of an identity through time. Elsewhere I have argued that theories of narrative conceptualize the personal conduct of life and life-trajectory one-sidedly in an abstract dimension of time and lose the relations of time-space in persons' participation in the structures of social practice (Dreier, in press). Thus, Ricoeur (1992) sees identity as an emerging temporal sameness with a narrative core.

Another theorist of social action, Strauss employs the concept of trajectory as a key concept. According to his conception, a trajectory only reaches across time, while the spatial structure of social practice recedes into insignificance. He defines trajectory merely as

> (1) the course of any experienced phenomenon as it evolves over time ... and (2) the actions and interactions contributing to its evolution (Strauss, 1993, pp. 53-4).

Again the concept of action goes hand in hand with an abstraction from the contextual structure of personal participation.

Finally, some theorists historicize the concept of identity, but do not explicitly include in their conception diversity in the structure of social practice and personal

participations. Like Burkitt (1994) they focus on the role of interpersonal relations in the formation of identity. They historicize their notion of interpersonal relations in a free-floating manner and do not locate them anywhere in particular in the structure of social practice and personal participations. Their focus on intersubjectivity comes close to conversational and relational perspectives in current psychology in that it does not conceptualize how these social relations are located parts of a structured social practice. Let us take Charles Taylor's work as an example. In the chapter "The Need for Recognition" in his book "The Ethics of Authenticity" (Taylor, 1991) he states that the modern preoccupation with identity and recognition has become inevitable because of two major historical changes. The first major change is the collapse of social hierarchies according to which

> ... what we would now call a person's identity was largely fixed by his or her social position. (p. 47)

The emerging ideal of authenticity undermines this arrangement, he argues in the words of Herder:

> ... it calls on me to discover my own original way of being. ...(It) doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internalized, with others. (p. 47)

So even though social dependence was always there, what is new is that this recognition is now not a priori. The subject

> ... has to win it through exchange and it can fail. And that is why the need is now *acknowledged* for the first time. In premodern times people didn't speak of "identity" and "recognition", not because people didn't have (what we call) identities or because these didn't depend on recognition, but rather because these were then too unproblematic to be thematized as such. (p. 48)

The second major change has taken place on the intimate level:

> On the intimate level, we can see how much an original identity needs and is vulnerable to the recognition given or withheld by significant others. ... Love relationships are not important just because of the general emphasis in modern culture on fulfillment of ordinary life. They are also crucial because they are the crucibles of inwardly generated identity. ... On the social plane, the understanding that identities are formed in open dialogue ... has made the politics of equal recognition more central and stressful. It has, in fact, considerably raised its stakes. ... Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are refused it. (p. 49).

This, according to Taylor, is the background on which

> Not only contemporary feminism, but also race relations and discussions of multiculturalism are undergirded by the premise that denied recognition can be a form of repression. (p. 50)

And that is why the culture of authenticity has come

> ... to give precedence to two modes of living together ... (1) on the social level, the crucial principle is that of fairness, which demands equal chances for everyone to develop their own identity which included (...) the recognition of difference, ... and (2) in the intimate sphere, the identity-forming love relationship has a crucial importance. (p. 50)

Taylor's preoccupation with such common principles, standards, and values, however, makes him overlook the diversities of complex structures of social practice and the challenges which flow from such diversities for the structuration of personal social practice and identity. Actually, it goes unnoticed by Taylor that the two major changes he points to themselves reflect a changing contextual diversity and complexity of personal social practice, even though he seems to be aware that he locates these two changes in different social contexts, probably seen as the family versus "other places". He does not address the significance of people conducting their lives in and across these two

"spheres" for the formation and dynamics of identity.

A promising place to look for current theorizing which is preoccupied with issues of the diversity of personal social practice in a complex social practice is in the feminist literature. Here notions about authenticity of the person, self, and identity may be introduced to emphasize complexities inherent in personal participation in social practice. For example, in her book "Feminisms and the Self. The Web of Identity" Morwenna Griffiths (1995) studies identity by means of autobiographical materials and by drawing on the concept of narrative. She argues against a static and essentialist notion of self and identity:

> I have argued that the self is constructed through time. Thus spontaneity, rooted in the present, gives only a snapshot of an authentic self. There can be no unchanging authenticity to be found in this way, since the self is in a process of construction. (p. 175)

Indeed, the complex changes of identity and self make questions of authenticity more acute because authenticity cannot be resolved once and for all, and because it becomes more difficult to decide in which changing self authenticity is to be grounded:

> "Is this my real self that experiences, acts, is, feels, thinks, decides to do things for herself?" "Is it still really me after changes to my feelings and ways of understanding and reacting to them?" "As I change, am I being true to myself?" (p. 173).

> (T)he recurrence of questions of authenticity ... show that such questions keep imposing themselves. This is something which needs exploring and explaining. (p. 175)

Here Griffiths arrives at a turning point in her argument.

> A further complication is introduced by the view that the self is fragmented. ... If "the self" in question is actually more like "the selves", the answer to finding something more lasting is not to be found in seeking a coherent, transparent,

unity to the self, of the kind Descartes and Hume were looking for. If fragmented selves want to be true to themselves, then they do not mean they want to be true to some particular one clearly understood and unified self. (p. 175)

She argues that there can be more than one self in the same embodied person.

> In ordinary language it is commonplace to talk of sides or streaks in a person: 'She has an unexpectedly sentimental side to her character' or "She is kindly, but she has a real streak of malice" or "I didn't know that I would do that – but I did." (p. 181)

Yet, one must ask, what sort of unity is it that has all these sides or streaks to it? Griffiths continues:

> The self for which I argue ... is characterized by incoherence in its beliefs and actions, is not easily understood by itself. is only partly avowed... (And) ...the self is made up of a number of different, sometimes incompatible, "selves", all of which, taken together, make up the self as a whole. ... It is not unusual for a self to be surprised by itself, as different "selves" take precedence. (p. 181)

Therefore she maintains that:

> It is essential to acknowledge that there exists no unity of the self, no unchanging core of a being. Such a belief is a fancy and will mislead the self into seeking to establish it. Being true to oneself does not mean seeking after such a core. It means undertaking the difficult business of assessment and transformation within a changing context of self. Authenticity requires assessing a changing self, not preserving a sameness. (p. 185).

Griffiths takes these ideas even further arguing that we are all hybrids, picking up a notion of Stuart Hall's. She speaks of different fragments being at war with each other and of coalitions (rather than consensus) being formed through negotiation (p. 183). And she finishes her book saying:

> It is simplicity which has contributed to sameness and oppression. Infinitely preferable is the variety, confusion, color, hotchpotch, kaleidoscope, medley, motley, and harlequin of patchwork selves. (p. 191)

To describe the work of identity in a fragmented subject Griffiths uses the metaphor of "weaving":

> The metaphor of a web is useful in understanding both "becoming" and "agency" (with "web" understood here as tapestry, weaving, crochet and lace, rather than as a spider's web). At first sight needlewomen seem free to create whatever web they fancy. A longer look shows that this impression is misleading. Webs are always made in a temporal and social context, and they get their meanings from that context. There are only some patterns available. Still, a needlewoman does have room for maneuver. (p. 178)

Her crucial idea is that the fragmented bits and pieces are woven together into a web of identity, and she extends it into a notion of patchwork identity, stating at the conclusion of her book:

> I started the book with a metaphor of webs. I end with an extension of that initial metaphor, a metaphor of patchwork. ... (L)ike patchwork, making a self is relatively easy, though it always takes time and attention. However, again like patchwork, making a good one is very hard indeed. Understanding which pieces of old cloth will fit into the whole is a difficult and painstaking matter... (p. 191).

Celebrating diversity, like Griffiths does, is stimulated by insisting on the recognition of crucial differences such as gender differences which we can not sensibly aspire to dissolve in the process of social transformation towards a more just society (Fraser, 1997). Difference must be recognized, also in the process of social transformation. But there are some peculiar features to Griffiths' argument concerning identity and diversity which I shall point out in relation to my arguments in this paper. Let us first remind ourselves that Griffiths grounds fragmentation in the fact that the same person is a member of diverse communities and faces diverse social demands. She argues that the individual person cannot integrate these memberships and demands into a personal unity of the self and identity. Precisely this is the essential difference between her theory of the self and identity and traditional theories which argue that the self and identity can and should be unitary. Griffiths does not notice, however, that in all other crucial respects her theory and traditional theories share the same basic premises. In fact, she sticks to the same notion of the function of the self and identity that we see in the traditional conceptions which she is critical of: They all argue that the crucial function of identity and the self is a subjective ordering. Griffiths merely does not believe that this subjective ordering can and should accomplish a complete subjective coherence. Like role theories she highlights the significance of diverse memberships and demands, but while role theories insist that the subjective ordering of these diverse demands and memberships can lead to an integrated identity and selfhood, Griffiths stopped believing it. She claims that the individual can not bridge these diversities in its formation of an identity as a peculiarly subjective accomplishment and synthesis. Instead we find a fragmented subjective order.

However, to conceptualize identity as a subjective accomplishment of ordering – of tying the streaks, sides, or patches together in and for the individual subject – turns the whole idea of what identity is about into a primarily epistemological concern indebted to a dualist philosophy. The question of "Who am I?" basically becomes a matter of representing the world with its diverse demands and memberships in a matching subjective construct while the basic praxeological question of how to conduct a life and relate and balance off one's diverse participations is not explicitly addressed – or better: assumed simply to follow from their representation in the subjective order of identity.

The patchwork, i.e. the pattern which the subject then construes out of the various pieces of diverse memberships and demands, is a purely subjective pattern of subjective identifications. Strictly speaking, it is neither a reflection of the objective "pattern", i.e. structure, of the social practice of which these memberships and demands are particular parts, nor a reflection of the "pattern", i.e. structure, of that subject's personal social practice in these structures of social practice. This is revealed in some peculiar features of the metaphor of self and identity as a patchwork. As we all know, in the construction of a patchwork a) all pieces are mutually unrelated ingredients, b) all pieces are different, but in and of themselves homogenous, a) all pieces in principle matter equally much or little, and d) they are fitted together by the subject, as a subjective process of construction (with certain added constraints). Therefore, e) all pieces can be fitted as you like, i.e. arbitrarily. There are, in other words, no robust criteria of fit, only subjective criteria of construction and constructionism. And finally f) there is a constructing agent – an I – at a higher level who does all the fitting of the pieces, all the patchworking, but who is beyond the reach of the theorizing, and thus turned into a God's eye perspective after all.

Griffiths' emphasis on fragmentation makes her lose sight of the personal necessity of becoming able to conduct a complex personal social practice and life-trajectory. Her standpoint of analysis is contemplative rather than practical. In practice, to be the kind of fragmented person which Griffiths cherishes, would be a deeply problematic and disoriented state of affairs. If a person were to stick to such a vision, many of its vital concerns and pursuits which need to be located and conducted across social structures of practice, would be thrown off their tracks, and the person would turn into a sort

of chameleon. Griffiths neglects the fact that the person must first relate diverse claims and memberships in practical, personal terms into a personal conduct and trajectory of life. This practical personal necessity can not be neglected without serious personal consequences. Actually, Griffiths does not address the ways in which individuals conduct a personal life with such diverse influences in and across diverse contexts. She only addresses the issue of unity versus fragmentation for individuals facing diverse demands and contemplating these diversities. Contrary to Griffiths, I have emphasized that diversities are located in a structure of social contexts in a structure of social practice, and that these diversities primarily have to be dealt with in practical terms by persons as a part of the conduct of their everyday social practice and life-trajectory. Therefore, the theoretical understanding of the processes of personal reflection with which the issues of identity are concerned must break with an implicit premise of distance (see section 3), and be reconsidered as a process of finding oneself where one really already is located in complex social practice.

What, then, does Griffiths have to say about the structures of the social world which give rise to the subjective construction of fragmented identities? She argues that some fragmentation comes from political structures of oppression which create several divides that touch upon everybody and lists gender, race, class, and sexuality. She then adds other "material conditions and experiences and interests that do not fit readily into categories of oppressor and oppressed", listing regional differences, migration, parenthood, and affiliations of interests (p. 182). Yet, she does not ground these divisions according to the particular, interrelated ways in which persons encounter and can address them in and across diverse social

contexts as a part of their everyday conduct of life and life trajectory. She loses the grounding of diversities and of personal processes of orientation in relation to them in that person's participation in social practice. If the heterogeneous diversities in social practice which Griffiths lists are to be conceived as pieces of a subjective patchwork, they must hence be construed as a series of internally homogenous, but mutually heterogeneous and disconnected cultures, communities, contexts and free-floating influences. Indeed, when Griffiths speaks about a community she refers to a group or a culture of which a person can consider herself, or is being construed, to be a member. It is not a community of practice. She may, therefore, very well cherish diversity and multiplicity as sources of learning and developing, but what she means is that:

> The more we are members of different communities and the more we are each multilingual, the more opportunities we have for change. (p. 187)

Griffiths also mentions "context" on several occasions. But it is a vague, almost free-floating social context, and its practicalities and how to think systematically about structures and variations in these contextual social practicalities are missing. Her notion of context comes closer to her preoccupation with language and social interaction than to structures of social practice.

6. Conclusion

The examples of current research on the person, identity, and self in the previous section show a remarkable neglect of the significance of the fact that persons live their lives by participating in complex structures of social practice and by conducting trajectories in and across diverse social contexts. They do not understand personality, identity, and self from the standpoint of subjects involved in

such a practice and as a means for these subjects to orient themselves in it and reflect on it. This critique of their shortcomings is part of my theoretical argument for why we need to develop theories about complex personal trajectories of participation in structures of social practice and offer persons analytic means for an adequate self-understanding.

As we have seen, this critique holds even for theories which recognize that we must grasp the person, identity, and self in a social world. And we have seen that their theoretical shortcomings make them present the person as a relatively free-floating and arbitrary agent and make their theories fit only too well into the fashionable social constructionism of our day. The grounding of people's lives in social practice becomes so thin and fragile that their lives give the impression of easily falling apart into fragmented bits and pieces, or multiple and fragmented selves as it is mostly called (e.g. Rowan & Cooper, 1999). Most narrative conceptions of the person, identity, and self seem similarly unconstrained and without serious personal stakes in relation to the person's structuration of a conduct of life and life trajectory. Much current theorizing of the person is, in short, floating above the ground of social practice, as one may put it in a Marxist paraphrase. It leaves the impression that grounding in social practice is of only trivial significance for what it means and takes to be and develop as a person. It is, indeed, odd to find that precisely a theory of the person, self, and identity stops short of theorizing the eminently subjective aspects of personal social practice one would expect to find in a theory of the subject in social practice.

Contrary to this, I argue that if we trivialize the full grounding of personal life in structures of social practice, we lose what it is all about: its concrete contents, what it is a part of, involved in and concerned with,

the full significance of many of its real possibilities, challenges, dilemmas, problems, and contradictions. And instead of theories about this rich content of personal life we build theories about abstract structures of personality or representations of oneself. We would, for instance, become able to understand that being a many-sided person is not just having different streaks, sides, or patches, but is a reflection of living a many-sided life in which we pursue diverse concerns by participating in different ways in diverse contexts. But instead of being concerned with theorizing the person as a participant in a complex social practice, most theories seem preoccupied with the question of unity versus fragmentation in the structure of one's own or others' representation of oneself. What is meant by "self-understanding" would then just be a self-representation; coming to an understanding with oneself about how to conduct one's everyday life and life-trajectory would take us to another, both more complex and rich level of what self-understanding means (Holzkamp, 1998). Let me briefly point out that to ground a conception of the person in its participation in structures of social practice in no way excludes recognition of the personal significance of values and ideas about the good life. It only means to insist that values and ideas are also encountered and will gain particular personal significance in different personal social contexts, and that we must grasp how they become a particular part in the person's conduct of life and life-trajectory. And let me also briefly point out that this approach opens the doors to seeing personal learning and development through participation and as participation in structures of social practice. Questions of personal stability and change are then tied to stable and changing structures of personal social practice and to participating within their given boundaries or to taking part in changing

them and going beyond them. My aim in this paper is merely to lay some of the most basic groundwork for such a theory of the person. It remains to be elaborated and detailed in a richer and more concrete and lively understanding of the person, paradoxically, not by looking directly "into" the person, but by looking into the world to grasp the person as a participant in that world.
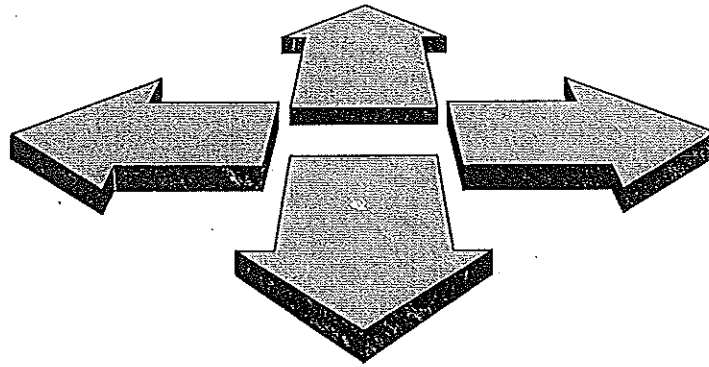
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