Editorial

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It is with great pleasure that I introduce this new issue of *Outlines – Critical Practice Studies*. It is composed by four innovative, thought-provoking and generous papers. On behalf of the editorial team, I hope you will enjoy them. This editorial points back in time to our last issue, giving a brief introduction to the articles to those of you, who might have missed out on this issue so far.

Vol. 17, no. 1 is all about collaboration. On a macro level one paper studies collaboration between Nepalese workers and their workplace during economic crises; on a micro level – or on the level of psychological functions – one paper investigates requirements to artificial speech-mediators for speech-impaired persons. In between these levels, papers on collaboration in development of educational practices dominates the issue.

Studying collaborative practices, or taking active part as a researcher in collaborative projects, is in a dialectical sense at the heart of Outlines – Critical Practice Studies. In simple words this journal is built on an ethical credo that the enterprise of research is not just *about* the lives of people but just as well along *with* and *for* the people living. The five papers approach collaboration in particular ways, and with particular foci, which I, in the following, will do my best to present.

Hengst, McCartin, Valentino, Devenga and Sherril (2016) investigate communicative practices between speech-impaired and non-speech-impaired students navigating at a university campus. Their research-question regards the development of artificial speech-mediators, which in everyday life helps numerous persons with speech-disabilities. Building on Cultural Historical Activity Theory, the authors take a critical stand towards the interpretation of speech-devices as mere replacements of a damaged body part. Following their line of theory such devices are rather to be seen as mediators of distributed, communicative activity and dialogical practice. They find empirical support for this argument through a fine-grained analysis of everyday communicative practices of speech-impaired students as they navigate, interact and engage in dialogue with other human beings in fairly complex functional activity systems at the campus of University of

Illinois, and this turns speech into a collaborative communicative medium rather than an organ of sounds. Language is thus not only communicative but a tool for making sense of and creating cultural meanings within a community.

On a macro level Bhattarai (2016) investigates collaborative practices amongst workers in the industrial sector during special conditions of industrial crises. Bhattarai's case is the historical situation of Nepal, where natural disasters such as massive earthquakes, flooding and landslides and only making things worse, a massacre of the royal family, riots and decades of political instability and economic deprivation. Reviewing the literature on organizational mechanisms, the author finds that a prevailing assumption is that industrial relations concentrate on welfare of individual enterprises, meaning that actors attempt to maximize their own interests while neglecting others'. While this might hold true during stable conditions, a different managerial and social logic seems to prevail during catastrophic crises as the ones the author investigates, where leaders cannot be held accountable for the critical situation. Bhattarai's empirical analysis shows a shift in orientation and practice from the principle of self-maintenance and cost minimization to the development of empathic interdependence in and between the managerial levels in order to ensure collective security by surplus-production, that subsequently functions as immunity of the industry. The paper demonstrates that collaboration, is thus not only a negotiation between two parties. Rather, it is embedded in cultural conditions, constraints and practices; it works with the aim of improving.

The three papers on educational development draw on research, in which the authors take an active part in the developmental educational processes. In this way each paper expands the objective of collaboration by emphasizing the active role of the researcher, evident in action research methodology. The empirical material stems from Greenland and Brazil.

Magalhães (2016) investigates how an intervention research (Teacher Support System) promotes the teaching of reading and writing in a public elementary school in São Paulo. The methodology of the research intervention builds on cultural-historical theory, and in particularly on the work of Vygotsky, and centers around the idea of interrelated learning (i.e. new ways of thinking and acting intentionally) between different groups of actors. The idea is, that this produces a redundancy of novelty considered more sustainable given its distributed and interrelated nature, thus enhancing transformation of the school community by creating "*mutual zones of proximal development, that supported teachers, coordinators and the principal*" (2016, p. 58), in developing dynamic and processual teaching strategies for reading and writing. In this sense Magalhães points to the fact that collaboration is not just a simple matter of collectively obtaining goals but to a high degree a matter of generating goals; goals that are experienced as being meaningful to the persons taking part in the collaboration. As such the papers expand the analysis of collaboration by emphasizing the contingent nature of the objective conditions for practices within the social world.

Glendøs (2016) takes us to East Greenland and opens a small window to her community research which, like the work of Magalhães, stresses the interdependent relations of change, structure, people and community as well as emphasizing the necessity of local utilization. Here, the community project centered on supporting the development of resilience **with** school children, who live in a challenging sociocultural environment. As a first step the project intervention was to make the voices of these children audible to the community, and in particular to the teachers of the school. In making such a move, the

participants reasoned, that there would be a ground for building local educational practices that were involved in the developmental situation of the pupils and thus supporting subjectivity (individually and collectively) through education. The paper investigates the teacher's responses to such an invitation through Valsiner's model of internalization and externalization. In this manner the paper offers a methodological direction for ideographical approaches (Hviid & Villadsen, 2017), which take the personal level of meaning-making as an ongoing point of reflection in the processes of collaborative interventions.

With Nasciutti, Veresov and de Aragão (2016), we are brought back to the Brazilian educational context and introduced to yet another piece of exemplary action research. While diagnosing, that the educational system in Brazil has progressed, the authors claim that there is still a tendency to split psychological functions from their cultural context, and thus perceive learning (and teaching) as individual issues going on inside each individual learner/teacher. The research conducted aimed at creating a group-platform as a source of development for the professionals. The theoretical frame of the project was cultural historical psychology with a special emphasis on the concepts of crises, social situations of development and perezhivanie, originally formulated by Vygotsky. Following a methodology of collaborative group practices, the authors investigated the group as a productive source of professional development. As the group is studied through a lens of historical conceptualizations (crises, social situations of development etc.) the group appears as an intentional and goal generativing formation that cannot be reduced to the sum of the (singular) subjects forming it. The paper draws attention to the strengths and the developmental dynamics of the local, historical collective.

Enjoy!

Pernille Hviid, Editor.

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Who gets involved with what? A discourse analysis of gender and caregiving in everyday family life with depression

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Abstract

The recent process of deinstitutionalization of the psychiatric treatment system, in both Denmark and other European countries, has relied heavily on the involvement in treatment and recovery of cohabitant relatives of diagnosed people. However, political objectives regarding depression and involvement rely on a limited body of knowledge about people's ways of managing illness-related problems in everyday life. Drawing on a discursive notion of gender laid out by Raewyn Connell, the aim of the article is to elucidate how the involvement of relatives is guided by an extra-individual rationale about gender and caregiving, and how this gendered discourse might frame different challenges and burdens, depending on the gender of the diagnosed person and the cohabitant relative. Drawn from a larger, multisited field study on involvement processes in Danish psychiatry, the article is based on field notes and 21 interviews with seven heterosexual couples. The analysis shows that gender works as a decisive premise for the division of caregiving labour among the couples, and clarifies how the couples' gendered institution is disrupted after the onset of depression. The article argues that gender-blind involvement strategies could produce divergent treatment outcomes and varying social effects in relation to couples' everyday family lives.
Keywords: Involvement, caregiving, gender, discourse, ethnography, interviews

Introduction

During our conversation, Jasper made it clear that he had not noticed the illness before the diagnosis was made in 2009, in spite of the fact that Linda had felt ill since she was bullied by her boss in 2001. Jasper said that he had not observed Linda's recurrent depressed condition,

but that Linda's strength and mood varied from day to day. I might have seemed surprised, but remained silent. Linda explained that Jasper had neither participated in conversations with psychiatric professionals nor with social workers, because she did not want to worry him. Thus, she had brought her mother and sister along to the initial psychiatric sessions. Jasper seemed surprised when Linda explained this, but he emphasized that he did bring her some clothes when he received the call from Linda's mother that Linda had been admitted (First visit, March 2012, Jasper and Linda, both 42 years of age)

This field note is from a field study on the involvement of relatives in Danish psychiatry, in which involvement processes were ethnographically explored among seven heterosexual couples, in which one adult had been diagnosed with depression. The above excerpt indicates that the husband of a diagnosed woman had not been involved with the emotional care and treatment of his wife's depression over the course of eight years. Because the wife did not want to worry her husband, she instead invited other relatives to be involved with the management of her illness, treatment and care. The initial conversation with this couple, further visits, and field work in the homes of the other six families highlighted the fact that the husbands of wives diagnosed with depression were not engaged to any great extent with care and treatment, nor did they have an in-depth understanding of their wife's illness and emotional state. By comparison, the wives of husbands diagnosed with depression were largely responsible for understanding and managing their spouses' illness. In this article, we analyze how gendered positions in the family underpin the organization of the couple's different areas of obligation and engagement in the management of problems in everyday life with depression. We argue that psychiatric notions and practices of involvement need to take into account the fact that ways of handling depression in families are gendered.

Background

In recent years, the involvement of cohabitant relatives has become a pivotal element of political and professional initiatives to reduce societal costs associated with the prevention and treatment of mental illnesses, such as depression (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), 2009). The process of deinstitutionalization of psychiatric treatment, in Denmark and other European countries, relies heavily on the involvement of cohabitant relatives and others of significance, with a view to optimizing recovery processes and preventing relapse (Hoof, 2011; Oute, Huniche, Nielsen, & Petersen, 2015). These political objectives regarding involvement and depression often rely on a limited body of knowledge about couples' ways of managing illness-related problems in their everyday lives (NICE, 2009; Umberson & Montez, 2010). Given that approximately two thirds of any population diagnosed with depression are known to be women (NICE, 2009; Umberson & Montez, 2010), and given the political objectives to reduce societal costs, in conjunction with subsequent clinical efforts to involve relatives, gender-blind involvement strategies could well produce divergent treatment outcomes and varying social effects in relation to couples' everyday family lives.

In previous qualitative health research, the involvement of relatives in the context of depression has predominantly been narratively explored. Based on a narrow range of informants, selected on the basis of the illness characteristics of the diagnosed person and their partner, involvement has been framed as an individual concern. Within this field, little attention has been paid to the broader sociological understanding and effects of gender. Instead, these studies have tended to focus on the psychosocial characteristics of

the actors' social identity that works as a premise for daily role-play and relatives' ways of managing illness-related problems throughout the illness trajectory (Hansen, Jakobsen, Rossen, & Buus, 2011). Despite the fact that several social scientists have proposed that depression and other mental conditions should be considered as social phenomena, the broader social and moral context for depression and involvement has been left largely unexplored (Hansen, Jakobsen, Rossen, & Buus, 2011).

What remains somewhat unaccounted for in the literature that intersects depression and caregiving is the reciprocity of societal ideals, values and depression, which in turn frames how the diagnosed individual's, relative's or family's condition is experienced and can be managed (Busfield, 2000; Kleinman, 1995). The kinds of values and ideals that are often not taken into account in these studies have been highlighted in the historical work of French sociologist Ehrenberg, who showed that depressed individuals can be seen as subjects of a contemporary condition that is framed by the very signs and symbols that contradict (negate) neoliberal ideals of autonomy, capacity to act, and responsibility (Ehrenberg, 2010). Ehrenberg's work highlighted that these moral premises constitute individuals classified as depressed in contemporary society, but it also puts into perspective why such individuals are considered to be a persons in need of care. Despite the fact that Ehrenberg's work does not show how these moral premises actually function at an institutional level, his work established a framework that puts into perspective how and why relatives often feel obliged to involve themselves in the caregiving labour; i.e. the practical management of illness-related problems and the regulation of emotions and feelings linked to depression, with a view to normalizing the diagnosed individual (Karp, 2001; Oute et al., 2015; Oute, Petersen, & Huniche, 2016; Umberson & Montez, 2010). However, the study of the social origins of depression, by psychologists Brown and Harris (2011), who established that serious, provoking events play a significant role in the development of depression in women, did not include such a moral framework. Their study highlighted that women who lacked an intimate relationship were more likely to develop depression than those with supportive partners, thus indicating that having a partner could be seen as a protective factor (Brown & Harris, 2011). In a highly recognized study on mental illness, involvement, and caregiver burden (Karp, 2001), the sociologist Karp depicts how relatives experience their obligation towards their partner in different ways and how families manage emotional and practical problems in their everyday life after the onset of illness. Karp's work suggests that the boundaries of relatives' obligation to care depend on the nature of the relationship and the strength of social ties among the diagnosed individuals and their relatives (Karp, 2001). But, as Karp notes, the gendered context that structures the ways families experience depression, their ways of managing and the burdens that ensue from the division of practical and emotional obligations of care are still largely unexplored (Karp, 2001).

This article on caregiving adds to the literature on the involvement of relatives in the context of depression. Drawing on previous research on gender and depression, the purpose of this article is to elucidate the following research questions: How is the involvement of relatives guided by an already-present discourse about gender, and how might this gendered rationale (discourse or understanding) frame different challenges and burdens, depending on the gender of the diagnosed person and the cohabitant relative? How could the involvement of relatives facilitate recovery in individuals diagnosed with depression?

Gender, discourse and depression

In order to analyze the gendered context of depression and how it constitutes caregiving, we need to consider how gender is conceptualized and structured discursively. In an article on the relation between gender and health, the influential Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (2012) addresses the limitations and inadequacies of the common categorical understanding of gender as something static and unproblematic that orders identity categories of women and men. Such identity categories are highly prevalent in policy and health research; for example, in epidemiological research, where it is consistently reported that women experience higher rates of depression than men (Ussher, 2010). The logic of this categorical understanding of gender is founded in a biological essentialism that renders a popular belief that the biological difference between the sexes is expressed as differences in psychological characteristics and behaviour; a belief that has been decisively refuted by multiple gender scholars (Connell, 2012; Kumar & Gupta, 2014). Australian health psychologist Ussher (2010) emphasizes that epidemiological findings are constituted by "realist epistemology" and a discourse of medical naturalism that frames an understanding of depression as a *"naturally occurring pathology within the woman"* (Ussher, 2010, p. 9). However, in American sociologists Hill and Needham's (Hill & Needham, 2013) review of the link between gender and mental health, little or inconsistent empirical support was found for the proposition that depression is a functionally equivalent indicator of misery and that women often respond to stressful conditions by developing affective disorders.

Thus, multiple gender scholars argue that more sophisticated approaches to gender ought to be reflected in health research, because this categorical understanding offers neither *"a way of conceptualizing the dynamics of gender"* nor an analytical strategy for shedding light on how gender orders are constructed and challenged (Connell, 2012, p. 1676). Connell proposes that the health studies on gender must focus on how gender meanings are discursively shaped, by drawing on a broad understanding of discourse that includes language, practices and all other symbolic systems. From this position, Connell argues that: *"The commonsense dichotomy of masculine and feminine is an effect of discourse, constructed by the way we talk, create images or texts, present ourselves, even how we conduct our research. Gender identities are not expressions of an inner truth but are subject positions in discourse"* (Connell, 2012, p. 1676). The structural positioning of masculinized and feminized subjects is construed as an effect of the coherence of elements of a discourse; a discourse that both constitutes the characteristics of the subject and places it in a binary relation to other subjects. As such, a dominant (hegemonic) discourse of gender frames the continuing patterns of reciprocity of gendered subjects' interactions. These interactions take place within social institutions, such as marital institutions and family life. Such discourse has been identified in heterosexual, middleclass couples all across Scandinavia: Whereas men are commonly obliged to provide for the household and manage practical matters (e.g., lawn mowing or repairing things in the house), women are seen as carrying the primary responsibility for housework, childcare and care for the family's emotional wellbeing in general (Magnusson, 2008; Stefansen, Smette, & Strandbu, 2016). Drawing on the notion of a gender regime, Connell (2012) then proceeds to argue that such a relational understanding of gender can nuance the understanding of reciprocity and interaction among gendered subjects at the institutional level. This, then, provides a framework for making clear how hegemonic discourses about gender could be disturbed by subordinated forms of femininity and masculinity and challenged by

alternative and non-stereotypical ways of dividing labour in everyday life (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Magnusson, 2008; Stefansen, Smette, & Strandbu, 2016).

To understand the link between gender and depression, it is essential to consider the World Health Organization (WHO) classification of unipolar depression as it is used in a Danish context. According to the WHO, unipolar depression is characterized by at least two of the following core symptoms: Depressed mood, loss of interest and enjoyment and increased fatigability. Moreover, to classify a condition as depression, at least two other symptoms must be manifest, such as reduced concentration and attention, reduced self-esteem and self-confidence, ideas of guilt and unworthiness, bleak and pessimistic views of the future, ideas or acts of self-harm or suicide, disturbed sleep or diminished appetite. The minimum duration of an episode is two weeks (World Health Organization, 1996). Drawing on this understanding and/or its American equivalent (the DSM-4/5), a range of international studies have emphasized that the categorization of depression in Western, industrialized societies is structured by a hegemonic form of masculinity (Bengs, Johansson, Danielsson, Lehti, & Hammarstrom, 2008; Hammarstrom et al., 2014; Ussher, 2010). This implies that the dominant notions of masculinity and men's subjectivity are constituted by ideals about strength, independence, potency, rationality, success, lust and desire as well as effectiveness, stoicism, autonomy, and emotional control. Taken together, all of these ideals also frame the position(s) of feminized subjects, because they characterize the subject of the woman as the exact opposite: weak, impotent, empathic, lacking autonomy and self-reliance, the absence of rationality, effectiveness, lust, desire, and personal success (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Emslie, Ridge, Ziebland, & Hunt, 2006; Emslie, Ridge, Ziebland, & Hunt, 2007; Fullagar, 2009; Fullagar & O'Brien, 2013; Fullagar & O'Brien, 2014; Ridge, Emslie, & White, 2011). Drawing on this understanding of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, international studies have demonstrated that depression can be seen as a feminized condition distinguished by the absence of ideals of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Ussher, 2010). Taken together, the studies' findings bear a resemblance to Jack and Ali's (Jack & Ali, 2010) "silencing the self" theory, which offers a suggestion as to why women develop signs of depression and lose their self-esteem. This implies that women connect to other people in ways characterized by self-sacrifice, compulsive caretaking, pleasing the other, and inhibition of self-expression, if, that is, women conform to the societal norm of playing a feminized role in interpersonal relationships. All of these studies also highlight why depression and masculinity are considered to be incommensurable social phenomena. As such, the dominant discourse of masculinity structures subordinate and marginalized forms of masculinities, i.e. men diagnosed with depression are associated with signs of weakness, incapability and lack of authority and potency (Bottorff, Oliffe, Kelly, Johnson, & Carey, 2014; Connell, 2012; O'Brien, Hunt, & Hart, 2005; Oliffe, Galdas, Han, & Kelly, 2013; Oliffe, Kelly, Bottorff, Johnson, & Wong, 2011; Oliffe, Ogrodniczuk, Bottorff, Johnson, & Hoyak, 2012).

Methods and data

This gendered analysis of involvement and depression is part of a larger field study. The goal of the overall project was to make clear the constitutive social conditions for, and consequences of, the involvement of relatives in treatment and rehabilitation in Danish psychiatry. By means of multisited ethnography, the first author (Oute) investigated the social transformation of notions of involvement across a family site, a clinical site and a

political site (Oute et al., 2016). The studies from the political and clinical sites elucidated how relatives were articulated as semi-professionals who were expected to identify themselves as those who ought to take on the responsibility for the diagnosed person's compliance with medical treatment (Oute et al., 2016; Oute et al., 2015). Building on empirical materials from the field work in the family site, this article contests the dominant discourses about involvement that were identified in and around the political and clinical sites.

The field work in the family site took its point of departure in the everyday life of seven, purposefully selected, heterosexual couples, in which an adult person (18+) was suffering from moderate or severe unipolar depression, according to ICD-10 criteria (F32 and F33). The formal selection criteria were drawn from the studies critiqued in a qualitative meta-synthesis (Hansen et al., 2011) and were applied purposefully to select informants who could yield in-depth insight into the overall research issue. Informants suffering from problems of severe mental illness, such as psychosis, alcohol and substance abuse and acute risk of suicide were excluded.

Moreover, the couples were recruited in collaboration with the medical and nursing professionals at two out-patient units at which individuals suffering from affective disorders in the Region of Southern Denmark were treated. The clinics were located at two regional psychiatric hospitals on the outskirts of medium-sized towns. Besides the formal selection criteria, the final selection of diagnosed people and their relatives was framed by the professionals' gendered discourse(s) about involvement, because they held very protective and somewhat dominant attitudes towards the possible informants who were often described as weak, vulnerable or chaotic (Oute et al., 2016). The field work at the clinical site showed that the professionals' efforts to safeguard their patients from the researcher meant that the researcher was only permitted to invite the diagnosed people and their relatives to participate if the professionals saw them as well suited, strong, responsible, ready, "good enough" or appropriate (Hansen, 2016). This common outlook, that was identified among the white, middle-class professionals, was not only based on their patients' conditions, but was also framed by an overriding view of a suitable way of being involved with illness management as a patient and as a relative. This meant that female patients and relatives, as opposed to male patients and relatives, were repeatedly portrayed as being primarily responsible for caregiving (Hansen, 2016; Oute, 2016). All included informants were of Danish ethnic origin. The ages of the 14 informants ranged from 25 to 60, with an average age of 44. Out of the seven recruited couples, two were husband-depressed couples (27%). The occupational composition of the sample, outlined in Table 1, showed a spread from CEO to public employee to unemployed:

Peter/ Charlotte	John/ Betsy	Jasper/ Linda	Sarah/ George	Harry/ Mary	Liz/ Robert	Charles/ Sophia
Married, 34 years together	Not married, 3 years together	Married, 22 years together	Married, 36 years together	Married, 13 years together	Married, 41 years together	Married, 12 years together
Age: 52/51	Age: 25/27	Age: 42/42	Age: 53/52	Age: 37/37	Age: 59/60	Age: 41/33

CEO/ unemployed health prof.	Farmer/ unemployed health prof.	Blue-collar worker/ unemployed worker	Public sector/ unemployed worker	Public employee/ masters student	Unemploy e/ public employee	Incapacity benefit/ unskilled worker
2 adult children	1 baby	2 teenagers	2 adult children	2 toddlers	0 children	2 toddlers
First episode in 2008	First episode in 2012	First episode in 2009	First episode in 2003	First episode in 2011	First episode in 2012	First episode in 2003
2 episodes	1 episode	4 episodes	2 episodes	1 episode	2 episodes	1 episode

Table 1. Sociodemographic and illness characteristics of the recruited couples

The regional Research Ethics Committee in the Region of Southern Denmark was informed about the study and consented to the conduct of the field work. In accordance with the Act of Processing Personal Data, the Danish Data Protection Agency was notified about the study. All ethical requirements concerning informed written consent, confidentiality and utilization of data were met. Before obtaining the written consent of the research participants, Oute did make it clear that he was willing to breach confidentiality if a diagnosed participant was to express acute suicidal ideation or other potentially lethal, self-inflicted behaviour without wanting to seek professional help. All informants consented to this.

Due to the circumstance that most couples expressed that they were often exhausted by their situation, this part of the study was conducted as an "arranged ethnography", relying on frequent visits and appointments with the couples. Frequent follow-ups about informants' wellbeing and ability to participate were therefore conducted over the telephone, just ahead of the home visits. Taken together, the data consists of formal interview data and field notes from informal talks and interaction between the couples, their children and others (e.g., family members or professionals) during the visits and conversations. In total, 21 formal interviews were conducted; a joint interview with the couple and a separate interview with the diagnosed person and the cohabitant relative with each of the couples. The joint interview was conducted in order give the diagnosed person and the relative the same information about the study, to give them the opportunity to withdraw their initial verbal consent, or to get their written consent and sociodemographic data. Moreover, the joint interviews were also conducted in order to facilitate the couples in constructing a baseline narrative that could be nuanced in the subsequent individual interviews. The formal interviews ranged from 47 to 112 minutes and lasted, on average, 78 minutes. All interviews were initiated by an open-ended, narrative-invoking question "When did it all begin?" in order to generate rich descriptions of the interviewees' understandings of their family situation and how they were articulated (Hansen et al., 2011; Karp, 1994; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The individual interviews did not differ significantly from the joint ones with regard to the structure of the narrative. Given that the interviewer possibly represented a somewhat neutral outsider for the couples, several informants went into more detail about sensitive topics such as frustration, shame and anger during the individual interviews than during the joint conversations. The interviews were conducted in the informants' private homes or in the researcher's office – at the request of one informant. During and immediately after each visit or interview, extensive

field notes were produced in order to describe the atmosphere, actions and conversations before, during and after the interviews. Informal conversations lasted from 15 minutes and up to more than three hours. The field notes ranged from two to 15 pages. The field notes were produced by writing up thorough descriptions of conversations and interactions with the family members; preferably on the spot (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This way of triangulating these methods of inquiry worked particularly well to generate rich descriptions of the couples' practices and articulations of their interactions with each other (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The frequent contact with the couples and the fact that the interviews took place at the primary setting of their everyday life made it possible for the interviewer to build up a trusting relationship and to ask for detailed depictions of their concrete routine interactions in their home. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In total, the empirical material for the article consisted of 991 pages of interview transcripts and field notes. The field notes and transcripts were first coded inductively between visits to the families' homes. Assisted by NVivo 9.0 software, the initial coding guided the themes that could be elaborated during the following visit at the family's home. This way of working up analytical categories as an inherent part of the research process meant that unexplored themes could be elaborated during the individual interviews, whereas the coding process became increasingly focused on the couples' understanding of "gender characteristics" and their "ways of organizing involvement" in the problems associated with the illness. Taken together, the triangulation of methods and the process of coding not only enabled the researcher to produce a rich and nuanced understanding of daily family life with depression, but also made it possible to confirm or nuance different aspects of involvement and management of problems with the informants.

Who gets involved with what?

The categories reflected two different constitutive aspects of a uniform discourse about gender and caregiving labour across all of the seven families. The coherence of these aspects formed a discourse that framed how relatives were involved with the organization of practicalities and care in everyday family life with depression. However, because the present analysis displays a common and shared discourse among the seven families, the analysis might not necessarily reflect all family members' individual concerns, personal motivations or explanations about their involvement in issues surrounding the illness. As such, the analysis elucidates how the couples' extra-individual understanding of gender ordered their positions in their relationship, and how it framed two different ways of dividing caregiving labour among them in their everyday life.

Gender positions in the families

The couples articulated the generalized understanding that women and men occupy binary subject positions. In comparison to the abovementioned hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity (Emslie et al., 2007; Fullagar, 2009; Fullagar & O'Brien, 2013; Fullagar & O'Brien, 2014; Johansson, Bengs, Danielsson, Lehti, & Hammarstrom, 2009; Lehti, Johansson, Bengs, Danielsson, & Hammarstrom, 2010; Ridge et al., 2011; Ussher, 2010), the couples' articulation of gender signified two identities that were characterized as each other's counterparts. For example, one woman explains how the characteristics of women differ from those of men:

> We are just a man and a woman behaving badly. Well, if the both of us are in the living room, and Harry is fiddling with electronics, such as his phone, his IPad or something else, he is absolutely shut off. And the children address me because I am the one hearing everything. Well, I am always busy, whereas Harry is better at shutting down, shutting out everything around him. That way, I am just becoming more and more absorbed in the role of being a parent than Harry is. (Individual interview, Mary, diagnosed woman, 37 years of age)

By saying that "we are just a man and a woman", she articulates a naturalized or taken-for-granted understanding of the difference between men and women and the ideals regarding their positions in the family. The understanding reflects the notion that men can be expected to be "absolutely shut off" and that they "shut out everything around" them; i.e. they exert their independence and orientation towards their own desires. Conversely, women are characterized by an expectation of being "busy" and "hearing everything"; being empathetic as well as socially and emotionally orientated towards others; i.e. their children in this case. This categorical separation of the gender positions signifies the woman as a subject that is, primarily, involved with emotional labour in the family. The quotation highlights how the informant conceives the category of the woman, and how it frames her "absorption", alertness and sense of obligation, because she is "hearing everything". Thus, a woman's way of being empathetic and constantly vigilant towards the children established that she identified with and was characterized by the primary obligation to partake in the families' emotional problems, social suffering and wellbeing. Within this hegemonic understanding of gender, the woman is then characterized by sensitivity towards the needs and suffering of her partner and other family members, rather than being occupied with her own sovereignty, needs, pleasure and desires. By contrast, the man was articulated as a more autonomous and self-indulgent person with a clearer sense of boundaries of obligation towards the members of the family and his ill partner. This understanding emerged during the first interview with Linda and Jasper, a diagnosed woman and her husband in their forties:

> Jasper: But there is something about taking on others' problems that one, well … I might be a little better at thinking that it is not my problem.
> Linda: [making a joke about it] I already asked [him] if I could borrow some of that [capability].
> Jasper: ha ha…..yes…

The quotation also signaled the couples' articulation of gender because their notion of the difference between masculinity and femininity was explicated. Whereas the husband was conceived as someone who did not *"take on others' problems"* and thought *"that it is not my problem"*, the wife was signified by her deficiencies to do exactly that because she was a woman and/or depressed. The separation of their genders was confirmed by the wife's joke or request to *"borrow some of that"*. The articulation reflects the fact that she is characterized by a lack of ability to distance herself from the problems of others; i.e. the ideal for femininity, such as empathy. Whereas the joke can be said to presuppose that her husband is characterized by an emotional distance to others and autonomy because he is a man, the articulation suggests that she has become depressed because she lacks *"some of that"*; i.e. her husband's characteristics. As this understanding of gender was apparent in all of the included families, their articulations of depression suggest that the condition was

implicitly conceived as a lack of a masculinized capability to distance oneself from others. Thus, depression is not only represented as a gendered deficit consisting of a shortage of masculinity or excessive femininity, but the articulation of gender characteristics also contextualizes the division of practical labour and emotional care within the families.

Gendered division of practical and emotional caregiving labour

Data from the point of entry into all of the couples' lives – and particularly from conversations about the couples' consent to participate – proved to be significant, because the issue of getting access exemplified the discourse around gender and the division of practical labour and caregiving. The following excerpt stems from the first appointment with one of the seven couples:

> At 7 p.m., I turned up at their address. At first, I saw a man in his fifties standing in the driveway. As I parked my car, he watched me with a confused look on his face. I waved at him as I got out of the car and then presented myself. I stated that 'we have not met before, but I have made an appointment with Charlotte because I am doing a study on family life with depression'. As it turned out, Charlotte had forgotten our appointment and had not involved Peter in it. (Charlotte and Peter, first visit, June 2012)

The excerpt highlights the taken-for-granted understanding that Charlotte, who had been diagnosed with depression, managed their appointments with others regarding depression and emotional problems in the family and that, if she forgot about it, none of the other cohabitant family members would know or remember. Without exception, the interviews and field notes showed that it was the women in all of the seven couples who conducted the emotional "weather forecasts" and managed appointments, because they were in charge of the family's social activities and schedules with regard to caregiving and the management of the family's emotional wellbeing. Linda's and Jasper's case was particularly exemplary of this rationale.

> JO: Do you use the calendar too, Jasper?
> Jasper: Oh, no. That is hers.
> Linda: Yes it is. For instance, what are we doing this Saturday?
> Jasper: Yes, to me, it is more like 'do we have plans and when are we doing this and that'? [Directed towards Linda:] You always kept track of our appointments.
> Linda: [loving tone] Well, yes, then it won't have to fill up space inside your head. (First visit, March 2012, Jasper and Linda)

Their case also reflects a general pattern about what was at stake for all of the couples: a division of practical and emotional caregiving labour. This division of different areas of obligation emerged as an important premise for the ways of accessing the families' everyday lives as a field worker. The discourse implies that husbands and other male relatives of women diagnosed with depression were not significantly involved with the emotional care and psychiatric treatment and care regarding their partners' illness. This was brought about, at least partially, by the fact that the diagnosed women chose other women to be involved with, and responsible for, managing those types of obligations when they could not manage themselves. The couples articulated that it was adult women (daughters, sisters, mothers, sisters-in-law), both within and outside of the core family

unit, who were responsible to a greater or lesser extent for managing the emotional care work in the families when the diagnosed wives could not. Equally, the family members' articulation also relied on a dominant understanding of masculinity, which subsequently constituted the ways in which men were, at least primarily, obliged to get involved with the management of practical work linked to the illness and family life.

Managing practical labour

The couples' shared understanding of the gendered position of the man framed the ways male, cohabitant relatives engaged in different types of labour in everyday life. In the following excerpt, from a couple in their late twenties, the husband of a woman diagnosed with depression articulates how his subject position is symbolized by practical rather by than by emotional labour:

> I feel bad if I do not get to work [his job]. That is also why I do not come and attend that [outpatient clinic]. Well, the first time [she was admitted], it was bad back then. And then one must take time off. But I think it is hard to [take time off]. Especially, when the situation is as it is right now. [Making an example] Do you want to be on sick leave for a long long time or then all of a sudden you do not have a job anymore and you want to have another baby and then. Well, in my head. I always plan much further ahead than what a lot of others do. It is the same thing with our finances. That is something that we have always discussed a lot because I am always ... We may have money in our account now, but if I can see that something is coming up in a month or three, we cannot afford [to spend it] right now. (John, relative, 25 years of age)

As he explicated his constant efforts to plan and think ahead about his work and the couple's financial situation, he articulated that he was concerned with bearing responsibility for the practical labour in their family. When he referred to his ill partner's wish to be on a long sick leave, he underscored how his subject position and obligation to provide is contrasted by his partner's lack of practical responsibility for their finances. In contrast to the woman, the man was perceived as the primary individual concerned with the structural or objective practical tasks involved in the family's everyday life, such as earning money for the household, paying the mortgage, or securing the structural needs of the family. Within the home, the man was primarily obliged to initiate sexual activity and, at times, take care of practical household chores, such as making dinner or vacuum cleaning. In several interviews, the man was explicated as a "*provider*" (Peter, cohabitant relative, 52 years of age), a position that was also presented in contrast to the woman's:

> I had a lot to do at work, so we made the arrangement that she had a part-time job and took care of the factory at home (Peter, cohabitant relative, 52 years of age)

As an effect of this discursive understanding, it is considered legitimate that the husbands spend much of their time at work in order to ensure financial security for the household, while the woman is obliged to stay at home and run things in the family. The articulation of the man as a provider then brought into effect the view that the women are the primary managers of the emotional labour in the "*factory at home*".

Managing emotional labour

The idea that the women are the primary managers of emotional caregiving labour is articulated in terms of the woman's ability to relate to and sense the emotions, needs and desires of others and care for the social milieu in the family. Below, a diagnosed man articulates how this works:

> George: Sarah is good at observing how I feel.
> JO: Yes.
> George: And she conforms to it. Well, not that she pays special regard to it, but she knows that she cannot expect too much of me if she can see that I am tired.
> JO: What do you mean by conforming to it?
> George: Well, yes. She silently accepts that I am not at my peak.
> JO: Could you give an example of what you are thinking about?
> George: As you may have noticed, not much has happened here since you started coming here [in their home]. The living room floor still needs to be fixed and things need to be put up on the walls and the furniture is placed temporarily. And, well, it has to wait until I am ready. And yes, she accepts this. (George, diagnosed man, 52)

The quotation shows that the wife of a diagnosed man notices, accepts and conforms to the emotional problems of her husband. This suggests that the wife's subject position is constituted by emotional labour, encompassing recognition of and response to her diagnosed husband's (as well as her children's) emotional needs. Her sensitivity towards others, her recognition and emotional support signify her subject position. This is underscored by the fact that, by contrast, the diagnosed man is expected to put the couple's furniture in place and fix the couple's living room floor and walls. Taken together, the couples' coherent articulations of gender and division of labour constituted a discourse framing an institutionalized pattern of interactions among all the members of the families.

Disrupted family institutions

The gendered family institution of the seven couples was, however, disturbed after the onset of depression, and this posed a range of new considerations for everyone. The institutionalized, everyday life practices of both the man and the woman were partially changed by the obligation to care or by the debilitating forces of the depression. The illness thus signaled the onset of a transformation of the gendered relationship between the diagnosed person and their partner. The transformation involved a disruption of their previous, normal rationale about what it means to have the role of a man or a woman. Consequently, the disruption challenged the taken-for-granted social order within the couples' institutionalized relationship. The disturbance led to a range of considerations, depending on the sex of the diagnosed person and the relative; i.e. couples with a diagnosed woman and a male relative or vice versa.

Diagnosed women with male partners

The following quotation from a conversation with a male relative showcases how the subject position of a male partner was challenged on his recognition that his wife had been diagnosed with depression:

JO: What happened in there [in the emergency room (ER)] that evening? Was she admitted or what happened?
Jasper: No, but she.. [long pause]
JO: So, you drove there, picked her up and then went back home?
Jasper: Yes.
JO: How did that go for you?
Jasper: [Long pause] Uh, well. I don't think that I did more than that. The next morning … I suppose I got out of bed and ... I didn't really do much else than what I normally do. (Jasper, Male relative, 42)

In couples with male partners to diagnosed women, the man was constituted by emotional control and a limited sense of moral obligation to be involved in the illness and emotional wellbeing of his partner. Jasper was, however, obliged to take care of the practicalities of the household. In this sense, he was not considered as overly responsible for involving himself in the emotional labour. But, given that his wife had been diagnosed in the ER due to her illness, the seriousness of the situation morally obliged Jasper to bear some responsibility for the emotional care of Linda, because he was faced with her emotional problems when he picked her up at the hospital. Because this kind of task had primarily been carried out by other female family members, it transpired that his usual obligation to deal with the practicalities was combined with an obligation to care for her emotional wellbeing. As he came to reflect upon his obligations to be involved in the management of his wife's illness, his long pauses, his suppositions and unfinished sentences could indicate that he was faced with new and challenging considerations. The considerations could be either that his temporary emotional labour might have disrupted his understanding of his masculinity or that he realized that his masculinity situated him in an inadequate position to care emotionally for his wife. During conversations with the male partners in the other participating families, they articulated that they were faced with similar considerations: their position became ambiguous when they had to engage in an emotional-practical grey area, concerning, e.g., the management of their wives' sick leave, hospital admission, rights, or when arranging a family holiday. However, as the above quotation indicates, the disruption was time-limited, due to the fact that, in this case, Jasper had been only partially involved with the emotional caregiving labour, because Linda *"had brought her mother and sister along to the first psychiatric sessions"*.

Given that mothers, sisters, sisters-in-law or grown-up daughters were available to take upon themselves the emotional care and wellbeing of the ill person, partner or children, the threat of a disrupted social order in these families was therefore diminished in the couples selected for the study. This reduction of the threat entailed a redistribution of the emotional labour among the other women in the family. This meant that, in Linda's case, she retained her position as a manager of the emotional wellbeing of her children and relatives, because she continued to make arrangements regarding which of the other women in the family were to be involved. Conversely, Jasper remained the person primarily responsible for the practical labour. During acute periods of illness, the practical labour entailed non time-intensive tasks, such as bringing clothes and making sure that Linda came home safely or, as was the case in other families, he was obliged to be concerned with the safety of the ill partner in cases of suicidal ideation. The redistribution of emotional labour then made it possible to retain the gendered constitution within the

family, because the division of practical or emotional labour, respectively characterizing the man and the diagnosed woman, was only disturbed for a short time, if at all. In those instances, the reciprocity of positions in the family did not suffer a breakdown.

Diagnosed men with female partners

In the two couples with female relatives to diagnosed men, the reciprocal positioning of the man and the woman was disrupted after the onset of depression. The disruption entailed the couples trading places, in terms of the idealized masculine and feminine gender positions. At first, these couples tried to return to their previous, normal positions. In spite of ongoing struggles with depression in both couples, the couples tried to sustain the norm that the men maintained their careers and masculinized obligations within and around the family. This is indicated below:

> Well, and the activities we normally had, they were important, so we still keep up with them. That is because that they are a part of our life. That we are not just here within these four walls, right. So, we have to find the balance in managing everything. Then Brett can go to work again, and he can begin to work more [repairing things in the house] too again, right? (Liz, relative, 59)

Here, the wife of one of the depressed men in his sixties, who has a career as a public sector employee in a typically masculine line of work, articulates an idealized heterosexual gender relation by striving to maintain his position as an autonomous family provider, while she stays at home. As this proved difficult to uphold over time when the depression returned, the disruption was neither socially or emotionally unproblematic for the couples. Whereas the abovementioned potential disruption could lead to shame or confusion, the disruption in these male diagnosed couples, to a great extent, led to frustration and anger. In the quotation below, during a visit to their home, the female relative, Sarah, articulates her frustration with her husband's lack of progress and ability to take on his practical obligations:

> JO: Do you see any progress in him [her ill husband]?
> Sarah: Well, yes.
> JO: Like what?
> Sarah: Well, on his own he is starting to get things sorted. At home.
> JO: The lawn and?
> Sarah: Well, yes the lawn and … and he rides his bike and all that, that he ... The exercise and those things. But he still has not made an effort to ask the bricklayer from the other side of the road about those tiles.
> JO: What tiles?
> Sarah: For the kitchen. Above the sink. (Sarah, cohabitant relative, 53)

Sarah's frustrated articulations can be seen as a sign of her struggle to uphold the characterization of her husband's masculinity; hence making it difficult for her to sustain her sense of femininity. As she articulates that her husband is "*starting to get things sorted. At home",* she suggests that it is difficult for her to retain a coherent conception of her husband as a man, because her husband is only partially characterized by conducting practical labour due to the debilitating forces of the depression. Her addition of *"at home"*

underscores her difficulty and subsequent frustration, due to the fact that her husband is unemployed, and thus is neither performing responsibly nor in accordance with dominant ideals for his gender, because he is not earning money for the household. However, she affirms that *"he rides his bike and all that"*. In doing so, she affirms that her husband is partially occupied with his own wishes and desires to ride a bicycle, which then is articulated as a symbol of self-indulgence or hedonism; i.e. activities considered congruent with masculine ideals as well as effectual ways of countering the illness. But, despite this, she reinforces her frustration by stating that *"Well, yes the lawn and. […] But he still has not made an effort to ask the bricklayer from the other side of the road about those tiles"*. This suggests that, at least partially, she sees her husband as characterized by a form of femininity in spite of his biological sex. His femininity, or at least subordinated masculinity, is established by his slow emotional progress, lack of potency and the fact that he had not got around to sorting things out; all of which are negative or opposing characteristics of masculinity, thus constituting his femininity. Her articulation elucidates that the way of understanding the diagnosed man is framed by his loss of hedonism, constant vigilance towards and occupation with his wellbeing, thoughts and feelings. This incoherence between the expectations towards the biological sex of the man and his way of "acting like a woman" disrupts the gendered order between the couples and then required alternative gender positions and relations. The incoherence was brought into effect by the fact that the man only bore partial responsibility for practical labour in and outside their home due to his diminished capacity to work or provide for the household. Symbolically, this positioned him as a disturbed man with a diminished masculinity which, at least for a while, obliged his female partner to take on a proximate masculine position. Then, the transformation of the diagnosed man symbolically excluded him from being considered capable of bearing responsibility for either the emotional or the practical labour in the family during the time of the illness. Similarly, frustration, or perhaps even a sense of degradation, was evident during the visits at the homes of the diagnosed men and their relatives, as well as in interviews with the diagnosed men. This was indicated in the aforementioned quotation:

> Sarah is good at observing how I feel […] And she conforms to it. […]. Well, yes. She silently accepts that I am not at my peak. (George, diagnosed man, 52)

Here, the diagnosed man articulates that his wife has to "accept" or "conform" to his feelings or the fact that he is not at his peak. By using words that reflect an obligation or claim, his articulation suggests that he is critiquing and problematizing himself or his condition with regard to how it burdens his wife. This indicates that he feels frustrated and shameful, due to the fact that his wife has to conform to his current shortcomings and incapacity to manage his practical chores at home. As such, he implicitly refers to the aforementioned conception that depression could be seen as a deficit of a range of presupposed masculine capabilities, traits and behaviours. Time and again, the frustration and shame articulated by the two diagnosed men was brought about by their loss of hegemonic masculinity. On several occasions, the spouses as well as other close relatives of the diagnosed men articulated the diagnosed man's loss of masculinity, for instance by stating that he *"is more fond of talking than women are"* or *"when he is not around, we laugh at him, and call him a wimp"* (field note, Ingrid, sister-in-law of diagnosed man).

As a consequence, the diagnosed men were concerned with restoring their sense of masculinity:

> During the visit, George kept telling me that he is really not impotent, but that his current sexual inadequacies are a side effect of the antidepressants. He told me that this was much worse than the depression itself. (Field note, George, 52)

Due to the medically inflicted sexual inadequacies and the signs of loss of masculinity (e.g., inability to work or earn money), George's position as a man is disrupted. The disruption, then, places him as a failed or subordinated male. He explicates that he experiences this positioning as *"much worse than the depression itself"*, which may add to the burden of being ill and be a hindrance to his social recovery, because he articulates his marginalized position as discrediting and ridiculing.

This gendered understanding also frames the position and burden for the female relative: The woman becomes constituted by ideals of masculinity and femininity, given that, like most Danish women, she earns money for the household while, simultaneously, bearing responsibility for doing repairs in the house and for caring emotionally for all of the family members. The abovementioned frustrations felt by the wife could then indicate that she feels that she is bearing responsibility for more than her fair share; i.e. what has been described by psychologists Fadden, Bebbington and Kuipers (Fadden, Bebbington, & Kuipers, 1987b; Fadden, Bebbington, & Kuipers, 1987a) as a breakdown of reciprocal arrangements, which often leads to a combination of objective burden (changes in household routines, relations, work and leisure and health) and subjective burden (subjective distress among family members) (Kumar & Gupta, 2014). However, as depression often stretches over a considerable time span and often returns with renewed intensity, the masculine signification of the wife becomes more permanent. Over time, the illness and symbolization of the position of the female relative frame an overall obligation to take over responsibility for all aspects of family life, including the practical and emotional labour (Hansen et al., 2011). Then, she becomes absorbed by her involvement in what one male relative described as a *"provider"* (Peter, cohabitant relative, 52 years of age) and protector, thus, at the same time, reinforcing and sustaining the positioning of her subordinate man into a marginalized or minor position. In line with a previous Danish study on involvement and depression, this indicates that her absorption and the couples' disrupted, heterosexual marital institution either force the female relative to separate from the ill person or to recover by balancing the extent of her vigilance and obligation to care (Hansen & Buus, 2013).

Discussion

Our analysis displays seven heterosexual couples' binary rationale concerning the difference between men and women and their practice of involvement in the context of depression. The analysis points out that their idealized heterosexual gender positions, their understandings of caregiving labour and their subsequent burdens are constituted by the disruption of their subject positions.

Caregiver burden in family life with depression

Studying the rationale(s) that inform couples' reciprocal ways of organizing caregiving labour in their everyday lives can expose how relatives, and especially female relatives, could be both objectively and subjectively burdened (Kumar & Gupta, 2014) by taking over "more than their fair share". From this perspective, the present analysis of the ordering gender rationales and burden elucidate the link between how couples divide labour in everyday life after the onset of illness (objective burden), and how that could contextualize hostility, disappointment and socially repugnant ways of interacting if the social routines of the families' everyday life have stagnated (subjective burden). As such, our findings suggest that caregiving labour (involvement) and burden is highly dependent on the gendered context of depression; a link that psychologists have investigated numerous times in people diagnosed with depression and their partners. The studies of burden by Fadden, Bebbington and Kuipers demonstrated that relatives experience subjective burdens that match our findings: Social and leisure activities are impacted and marital relations are strained while facing problems with understanding, partly, due to lack of professional support and information about the illness (Fadden et al., 1987a; Fadden et al., 1987b). This indicates that depression could be maintained and reinforced in the interaction between depressed people and relatives. As such, the present article also sheds light on qualitative aspects of the findings from the survey of relatives of depressed individuals carried out by psychologists Coyne and Benazon (Benazon, 2000; Benazon & Coyne, 2000; Coyne et al., 1987) and an early review (Teichman & Teichman, 1990), in which it was concluded that *"depression is reinforced by the reciprocity of cognitions, emotions, and behaviors on the intra- and interpersonal levels"* (p. 349). Taken together, this supports the notion that the subjective burden of relatives could have serious health implications for both the diagnosed person and the relative, depending on the gendered context of depression and the families' division of labour.

The gendered context of depression, recovery and involvement

The importance of considering the gendered context of depression, recovery and involvement is emphasized by the fact that several studies have also identified differences in the relationship between partner hostility and depression in both husband-depressed and wife-depressed couples. Especially, wives and female partners in husband-depressed couples have been known to exhibit significant levels of burden and depressive symptoms (Kumar & Gupta, 2014; Rehman, Gollan, & Mortimer, 2008; Teichman, Bar-El, Shor, & Elizur, 2003). However, despite the fact that intersecting variables, such as education, social class, geographic position, occupation or age are given some consideration, individualistic orientation in much psychological and medical research often downplays the understanding of gender dynamics (Connell, 2012; Ussher, 2010). Following this line of inquiry, multiple qualitative studies have also elucidated the gendered context of depression in both women and men.

For example, critical scholars have argued that the cultural construction of women's subjectivity promotes responses that are constructed as symptomatic of depression. Compared to this article, similar analysis of gender and depression suggest that depression is discursively articulated as a social effect of what can be seen as too much femininity or deficient masculinity (Crowe, 2002; Fullagar & O'Brien, 2012). Bearing resemblance to a dominant discourse about caregiving, parenting and housework that has been identified in heterosexual families all across Scandinavia (Magnusson, 2008; Stefansen et al., 2016),

the couples from our study articulated strong alignments to idealized heterosexual gender relations: The couples' orientation towards such white, middleclass ideals of masculinity is connected with emphasized femininity, which could be seen as their efforts to return to "business as usual" (Oliffe et al., 2011). In spite of ongoing struggles with depression, their efforts to "return to normal" implied that the diagnosed men and male relatives tried to maintain their careers and domestic obligations in typically masculine arenas, while the diagnosed women and female relatives sustained their association in equivalent feminized positions. However, the diagnosed men's unemployment and signs of resisting medical treatment (due to sexual side effects) constituted a combination of what has been called "protest masculinity" and women's "ambivalent-protest femininity"; categories that resemble the abovementioned proximate positions of the female relative to the diagnosed man (Oliffe et al., 2011). This framed mismatching of gender expectations, which resulted in tenuous relationships that often fostered resentment and unresolved conflict among diagnosed men and female relatives. This mismatch could not only function as a hindrance to the diagnosed person's recovery but also as a barrier to the involvement of relatives. Following this line of thought, Fullagar and O'Brien (Fullagar & O'Brien, 2013; Fullagar & O'Brien, 2014) showed that women could be seen as subjects in recovery when they resisted the constraining forces of their families' and professionals' categorizations of their deficiencies and treatment needs by articulating themselves in new ways, rather than identifying with the category. This study showed that diagnosed women either strove towards normalization of their self by way of dutifully treating their deficient self or they redefined their notion of recovery and depression by identifying with the practice of caring for oneself and relating to others in different ways. In this study, the participating women were largely preoccupied with managing their process of normalization, because they continuously reflected upon their understanding of their deficient self and subsequent treatment needs, which to a large extent sustained the internal order and coherence of the family institution. Moreover, Bottorff, Oliffe, Kelly, Johnson and Carey (Bottorff et al., 2014) suggest that idealized femininity positions women as endlessly caring and patient. The female relatives also felt the strain of living with their depressed male partner, because they were hesitant to take over the position as constant emotional caregiver while, at the same time, having a job and bearing the burden of the family's practical, day-to-day responsibilities. By comparison, our findings also indicate how men's depression could lead to a disruption of heterosexual family institutions. The disruption was not only brought about by the fact that female relatives of diagnosed men are objectively strained by the multiplicity of emotional and practical tasks. They were also subjectively burdened by a prospect of a requirement to identify with masculinized ideals permanently while living with a man who was characterized by femininity.

New questions and further research

First, the heteronormative rationale discussed in this article questions the sustainability of the coherence of family life if or when the diagnosed women from our sample wished to recover from depression by identifying more with personal hobbies or engaging with others in different ways. As such, the gendered, organizing discourse could, in fact, work as a hindrance to diagnosed women's recovery, if male relatives continue to abide by a heteronormative family ideal in which diagnosed women are obliged to take on emotional and social functions in the family. As such, it puts into perspective what might happen to the structure of the heterosexual families with diagnosed women if no sisters, mothers or grown-up daughters, etc. were available to assist the psychological milieu in families.

Moreover, this analysis of the gendered context of involvement also calls for further qualitative studies that, to a larger extent, would clarify how the gender dynamics play out over time: To what extent do the partners' age, the length of their relationship, the number of children and the number of times they have experienced a depressive episode together matter (Hansen et al., 2011)? And how do diagnosed men over time recover from their symbolic positioning as failed or subordinated males? Do they develop strategies for restoring their masculinity by signaling hedonism, such as using alcohol or other substances or engaging in sexual activity or expressing vitality (e.g., aggression) in relation to others – an issue that has previously been discussed (Brownhill, 2005; Neitzke, 2015; Rochlen et al., 2010; Wilhelm, 2009).

Second, this gendered discourse equally shapes how male relatives are not expected to involve themselves in emotional caregiving labour. This insight might clarify why relatively few male relatives attend psycho-educational sessions for relatives in Denmark (Hybholt, 2014). Then, these insights contribute to the broad range of health and political studies that question the evidence, efficiency and productivity of political and clinical involvement efforts that tend to institutionalize relatives' responsibilities for emotional labour, given that female relatives are likely to take on such tasks (Hansen & Buus, 2013; Oute et al., 2015; Oute et al., 2016; Sulik, 2007; Umberson & Montez, 2010).

Third, the study questions the benefits of involvement of relatives in similarly positioned couples with a diagnosed man. Given that couples continue to abide by white, middle class, heterosexual ideals, feminized relatives could be burdened severely while the diagnosed men seem to be marginalized and stigmatized. Hence, the long-term effects of clinical efforts to involve relatives in Danish psychiatry by holding them responsible for care and treatment (Oute et al., 2016; Oute et al., 2015) could exacerbate the disruption of family life, and possibly inflict divorce. However, it still remains largely unexplored how gender, sexuality, education, class and the length and type of relationship (e.g., spouse or parent) could be constitutive of involvement processes in everyday life. As previously pointed out in a Scandinavian qualitative metasynthesis (Hansen et al., 2011), there is also a need for further research on how the various problems and burdens among diagnosed people and their relatives might be associated with the psychosocial trajectories linked to depression.

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What is Critique?
Critical Turns in the Age of Criticism

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Abstract:

Since the Enlightenment, critique has played an overarching role in how Western society understands itself and its basic institutions. However, opinions differ widely concerning the understanding and evaluation of critique. To understand such differences and clarify a viable understanding of critique, the article turns to Kant's critical philosophy, inaugurating the "age of criticism". While generalizing and making critique unavoidable, Kant coins an unambiguously positive understanding of critique as an affirmative, immanent activity. Not only does this positive conception prevail in the critique of pure and practical reason and the critique of judgment; these modalities of critique set the agenda for three major strands of critique in contemporary thought, culminating in among others Husserl, Popper, Habermas, Honneth, and Foucault. Critique affirms and challenges cognition and its rationality, formulates ethical ideals that regulate social interaction, and further articulates normative guidelines underway in the ongoing experimentations of a post-natural history of human nature.

In contradistinction to esoteric Platonic theory, philosophy at the threshold of modernity becomes closely linked to an outward-looking critique that examines and pictures what human forms of life are in the process of making of themselves and challenges them, by reflecting upon what they can and what they should make of themselves. As a very widely diffused practice, however, critique may also become a self-affirming overarching end in itself.

Key words: Affirmative critique, judgment, distinction, practice, philosophy, reason, Enlightenment, Man, anthropology, Kant, Heidegger, Habermas, Foucault, Schlegel, Plato

Critique in the Age of Criticism

In the foreword to the 1781 version of *Critique of Pure Reason*, the German Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant characterizes his own time as the 'age of criticism'.

Indeed, critique is characterised as that, "*to which everything must be subjected*" (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 13). While religion may often call upon its sanctity, just as governmental legislation upon authority, to avoid the challenges that arise in critique, phenomena that seek to elude criticism must, according to Kant, awaken legitimate misgivings of not being able to resist critique. For this reason, "*they become the subjects of just suspicion, and cannot lay claim to high esteem, which reason accords only to that which has stood the test of a free and public examination*" (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 13).

Just as Kant thought of his time, we still seem – at least in Western societies – to live in an age characterised by critique. Since the Enlightenment, critique belongs to the "*fundamental capacities of our cultural identity and self-understanding*" (Gasché, 2007, p. 12) or "*to the foundation of our cultural self-conception*" (Röttgers, 1975, p. 1). Critique has been crucial for the identity and self-understanding of modernity (Kolb, 1986; Touraine, 1995), as well as for private and public modern life (Koopman, 2010; Taylor, 2003; Habermas, 1987, p. 40). The critical approach is essential for critical theory (Cook, 2013; Butler, 2012; Celikates, 2009a; Jaeggi & Wesche, 2009; Honneth, 1994; McCarthy, 1978; Callinicos, 2006), critical thinking (Horkheimer & Schmidt, 1968), and literary criticism (Johnson, 1981; Jameson, 2008). As shall be made clear, critique has also been widely influential beyond this scope, in particular for modern science, and for art in seeking to oppose what is taken for granted. It is therefore of consequence for the understanding and articulation of a number of discussions and issues of major importance to examine and discuss the omnipresent notion of critique, and how it is susceptible to several interpretations.

In this article, I shall begin by unfolding how critique currently plays an incontrovertible and overarching role in how Western society understands itself. It is not only essential when we relate to others and ourselves. Indeed, as suggested in Kant's bicentennial work, it played a vital role for a long time. The diffusion and integration of critique in our social fabric is visible in the understanding that criticism can be applied to every dimension of society. Indeed, critique has become social criticism, in the sense that it is virtually ubiquitous and an incontrovertible part of the social fabric. I will likewise suggest that, as a result of this, critique also risks becoming increasingly vague and ambiguous, whereby it may become a liability and a caricature of itself. If societal practices become increasingly self-reflective and self-critical, it also becomes difficult to distinguish the features and strengths of critique as a specific and constructive activity. Thus, the state of criticism in its own age has become critical. It is this nebulous nature that makes critique itself the object of criticism. As the state of critique becomes critical with the age of criticism, the question becomes a matter of urgency: "*What is it to offer a critique?*" (Butler, 2003, p. 304)

In order to contribute to clarifying the ever present, but also somewhat confusing relation to critique, i.e. defining and clarifying its ambiguity, it may be worth emphasising the point in history where critique becomes essential for how reason, thought, and the human are conceived. Following a short overview of development in the early concept of critique, I will return to the decisive moment where Kant points out critique as a defining feature. Returning to examine the constitution of critique, in what was a defining moment for Western thought and culture, seems inevitable, if one wants to understand and discuss the concept in its role as an over-arching and indispensable, yet also somewhat problematic contemporary idea and a practice.

At the specific point in time where critique becomes a defining feature for Western thought, culture, and society, the groundwork is laid for a generalized conception of critique according to which it is a specific, but still first and foremost immanent and affirmative activity. The primary aim of the article is to demonstrate this and articulate the contours of an understanding of critique as a basically attentive, appreciative, and confirmatory activity. An accurate comprehension of this landmark idea of critique may serve as an important signpost. Since critique, conceived in this exemplary manner, contributed decisively to constituting today's wide and unsurveyable world in which it plays a major, yet also somewhat imprecise role, an articulation of this constitutive notion of critique may allow one to find one's bearings in the present complex landscape. In addition, an affirmative notion of critique may serve as an exemplar and indicate an alternative when critique threatens to lose its outline or deteriorate into a purely negative activity. A secondary ambition of the article is to show that the conception of critique as a mostly negative and destructive aim in itself – and the critique of critique for becoming a travesty of itself – is only possible with the generalization of critique, inaugurating the age of Enlightenment.

In a close reading of Kant's three major critical oeuvres, I shall articulate the salient features of the various types of critique. In extension, the article shows how the distinct forms of critique outlined by Kant have subsequently left their mark on and been further developed by three major strands of Western critical thought. At closer inspection, however, Kant's conceptions of critique and the ensuing traditions are not only to be distinguished from one another; all cases relate equally to each other and come together in understanding critique as being basically immanent and affirmative, rather than negative.

A subsequent section shows how Heidegger underlines the affirmative character of critique in Kant's work, even as it demonstrates how Schlegel elucidated crucial traits of this affirmative stance in the wake of the Kantian turn. According to Schlegel, the true critique characterizes the object in the light of what it seems on the verge of presenting and realizing.

The article moves on by demonstrating that critique, for Kant and Schlegel, is not primarily a negative effort to identify mistakes and limitations, but instead an endeavour to examine something important that presents itself and that we are part of in order to examine what we are in the process of committing ourselves to. As a consequence of this approach, critical judgment in Kant, Schlegel, and subsequent thinkers in this tradition does not respect the well-established dichotomy between is and ought, but affirms the impact of normative measures as the *conditio sine qua non* for critique. In the centre of critique we therefore find the virtual, rather than the factual and the counter-factual. With the generalization of criticism, philosophy becomes closely tied to critique in this sense.

The ensuing two sections of the article add to and provide further evidence for the basic argument for an affirmative turn with modern critical theory. They make clear that the modern critical turn may, at first glance and somewhat surprisingly, be perceived as affirmative in various respects, also when compared to previous pre-critical philosophies. When philosophy essentially becomes critical, there occurs a reversal of the original reactive inward turn that constitutes Platonic philosophy, as is demonstrated in the next section. As a consequence, philosophy now appears called forth by an immanent tendency to critical self-problematization and -transgression in various fields of experience. Subsequently, a section demonstrates how critical philosophy ties in with pragmatic

anthropology, understood as a critical and affirmative reflection on human existence. Pragmatic anthropology takes an experience of the human as a situated and examines what humans can make of themselves in extension with what they have already made of themselves.

The final section returns to the virtues and vices of critique in the age of criticism and gives an outline of the critical approach as practiced in the article. Thus, the article gives the outline of a positive yet pluri-valued conception and application of critique that avoids adopting a stance, in which critique is perceived as a negative and derogatory evaluation, in which the critic mainly affirms himself in a general dissociation from the world he evaluates. Critique is also, and essentially, an affirmation. The question is: of what?

The Ambiguous Incontrovertibility of Critique

Modern, Western democracies have often defined themselves in distinction from totalitarianism, because critique is possible in this particular setting, but also because critique is a core task and makes up an important commitment (Arendt & Canovan, 1998; Arendt, 1951). The willingness to subject other views to critical testing is not only assumed in the political system and public debate. The possibility of critique and commitment to criticise is installed as an essential component in many societal institutions.

Modern, Western science rests very much upon Pierre Bayle's conception of a republic of letters, "*in which each every single member is sovereign and must be able to justify himself in front of every other member*", since "*one does not present anything without proof*" and "*acts as both witness and prosecutor*" (Bayle, 1720, p. 812).

Despite major educational reforms such as the European Bologna Process that transforms the architecture of higher education curricula by focusing on learning outcomes, it seems – when studying various ministerial decrees and curricula across the educational system – that the traditional core educational goal to generate a critical and reflective students is still somewhat in place. In certain respects, this requirement may have become less accentuated, but there is still a focus on the self-critical and self-evaluating student (Popkewitz, 2008; Krejsler, 2006), all the while educational and research institutions are themselves subject to ongoing critical evaluations.

In spite of contemporary attacks, nobody could imagine literary institutions or even literature in general without critical review and its related institutions. While it could be said that authors must be willing to subject their work to criticism, authors and publishers even insist that also the establishment of literary criticism must be subject to various kinds of criticism. The question is not whether critique is to take place, but what to understand by critique.

In Western society, ongoing and sturdy criticism is therefore a basic principle and continuous commitment. It is, at the same time, at the centre of our self-articulation. This concern both determines who we are or I am and is involved in understanding others and ourselves. It also determines what we want to be and what we reject. The relationship to critique involves the modern, Western conception of self. As an employee, as a citizen and as a member of civil society, I am myself at stake in this conception of myself as a modern self that must establish a critical relationship to myself (Raffnsøe, 2010).

The Dissemination of Critique in Practice

The continued and dominant presence of critique as a decisive and determining factor in the political and public sphere, in education, science and literature as well as in personal articulation and self-understanding indicates that critique has become a persistent and un-remitting critical issue for contemporary forms of professional, collective and personal practice in general. In fact, the ubiquity of critique has not only altered the very idea and conception of practice; it has equally profoundly impacted and remodelled the very character of and practice of practice; and this happened to such an extent that a reconsideration of the critical stance to existing practice is necessitated.

Until the advent of modern times, it seemed reasonable and fair to assert, justify and accept established forms of practice and given procedures by referring to the fact that what we usually do or tend to do is simply what has so far appeared to be the best, most well-founded and time-honoured way to proceed within the given context. In among others the inherited institutions of common hereditary and customary law, the theory of law and theory of the state (Raffnsøe, 2002a-c; Raffnsøe, 2002d, p. 104-146; Raffnsøe, 2003, p. 1-27), human practice was previously conceived and accepted as a well-established and well-earned way to proceed within an existing larger framework or order.

In the age of criticism, however, any recurrence to already established and well-honoured practice has become highly problematic and may tend to be counterproductive or even self-refuting. A clinical psychologist or a medical practitioner trying to justify a new standard or experimental treatment on the grounds of his or her own personal experience rather than proven scientific knowledge that has passed the critical test is already in a tight corner. Instead of being conceived as stable and unchanging, as natural and inevitable, practice is today perceived as changing, challenging and self-challenging (Hamel, 2007; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Drucker, 2007; Senge, 1990; Schumpeter, 2000; Lopdrup-Hjorth, 2013; Bloch, 1959).

With the propagation and dissemination of criticism, the basic make up of human practice has thus been dramatically affected. In the critical age, the various forms of practice have become part and parcel of the *"modern process of relentless socio-cultural transformation"* (Nissen & Staunæs, 2017, forthcoming). Hit by and faced with an ongoing decisive crisis that may be possibly fatal but also potentially productive (Koselleck, 1973), practice seems to continuously reach and be forced to overcome a significant historic turning point where judgment is pronounced on the hitherto adopted lines of action (Röttgers, 1975; Raffnsøe, 2015a, p. 332). As a consequence, the various forms of human practice only become acceptable and reputable to the extent that they take on a self-problematizing and self-critical form.

As it is also prominent in the politics of New Public Management (Pollitt, Christopher, Bouckaert & Geert, 2011; Christensen, 2013; Gunter, 2016), alleged policies of necessity are today above all formulated in terms of the unavoidability of critically examining and reforming existing practices in order to be able to measure up to a future that is still arriving, wherefore it can only be apprehended and responded adequately to through critical discernment and anticipation (Raffnsøe & Staunæs, 2014).

While practice becomes inoculated with critical self-examination and thus has come to be perceived as a site of an ongoing crisis in the form of a critical self-distantiation, the established relationship between theory and practice, practice and practice studies, is equally affected. On closer inspection, the critical turn in practice (Schön, 2008; Argyris, 1993;

Thompson & Thompson, 2008; Argyris & Schön, 1974) queries received ideas *"emphasizing practice* as opposed to *theory"* (Thompson & Thompson, 2008, p. ix, italicized by the authors). According to this opposition, action in the conduct of everyday life and professional practice tends to be perceived as fundamentally and uncritically unaware of its basic character and presuppositions. By contrast, it is a basic task for the researcher to maintain a critical distance, permitting the scientist to uncover and expose the basic hidden presuppositions governing practice.

The perceived distance to uncritical practice has permitted traditional psychology to conceive of itself as critical from its early beginnings, in the sense that it is a science that uncovers previously undiscovered basic components and epistemic and ontological foundations of human behaviour (Wundt, 1883b; Wundt, 1883a; James, 1890/2010b; James, 1890/2010a). Equally, subsequent generations in mainstream psychology have criticized previous assumptions in order to establish more adequate scientific foundations (Skinner, 1974).

In turn, the ambition to maintain a critical stance toward previous scientific practice has allowed important strands of critical psychology to emerge and constitute themselves in terms of a *"re-foundationalist critique"* (Stenner, 2007, p. 45), aiming to establish more adequate scientific foundations (Brown & Stenner 2009, p. 20), now by adding a political, ideological and social critique to their epistemic critique of previous positions (Holzkamp, 1983; Tolman & Maiers, 1991; Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997). Further critical distantiation has led to non-foundational critiques of earlier psychology (Gergen, 1999; Gergen, 2001), psychologies without foundations (Brown & Stenner 2009) and post-psychology (Nissen, Staunæs & Bank, 2016; Juelskjær & Staunæs, 2016; Staunæs & Juelskjær, 2016).

The ongoing movement of critical distantiation resulting in critical psychology, psychologies without foundations and post-psychologies (Juelskjær & Staunæs, 2016) has certainly blazed new trails and led to new crucial insights. For example, critical psychology has managed to debunk ideological elements in existing social and scientific practice, to expose concealed social, cultural and personal issues, and to propose valid theoretical alternatives to mainstream theory (Nissen, 2008, p. 50-51). Equally, post-psychological researchers have articulated how post-psychologies are not only assisting new educational standards and reforming subjectivities but are also affected by these settings (Juelskjær & Staunæs, 2016). Nonetheless, the ongoing critical approach to previous practice certainly also faces new challenges with the propagation of critique in the age of criticism. If collective and personal, scientific and professional practice has always already become self-consciously self-critical and overtly self-transformative (Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer & Thaning, 2016b), the very idea of being critical by dissociating oneself from previous uncritical ways of behaving and thinking demands to be rethought.

In particular, the traditional critical ways of articulating scientific progress and innovation, as they have been moulded and handed over since early Enlightenment, become overtly problematic within the present self-consciously critical setting. If given assumptions and established procedures are over and over again seen as preliminary and under critical revision, it must seem misleading to perceive science and research as progressing through all-encompassing *"Copernican Revolutions"* (Kuhn, 2003), critically rejecting what was hitherto taken for granted to such a degree that they lead to new paradigmatic foundations and make us *"wish to say"* that after the critical turns we *"live in a different world"* (Kuhn & Hacking, 2012, p. 117; Raffnsøe, 2015b).

In prolongation of the propagation of critique, it thus becomes a pressing issue to conceive of alternative critical approaches to the ones practiced hitherto. For example, researchers within the psychological field have recently voiced the need to develop critical stances permitting to move beyond judging (Juelskjær & Staunæs, 2016) and to avoid taking either a purely negative and cynical standpoint or a position that simply naively and innocently reconfirms the practice of existing practices (Nissen, 2013). Consequently, the age of criticism raises the question how to develop and articulate an adequate stance in theory and practice with regard to forms of practice that are always already critical and self-critical.

The Caricature of Critique

Simultaneously however, there seems to be a certain fatigue and perplexity concerning this ever-present critique. Criticism constantly raises the question about how to relate to, live with, and bear the constant inquiry that one is subjected to. This issue is particularly acute for public institutions when they are monitored, evaluated, and accredited. It likewise applies to private companies and organizations, where an ongoing critique of existent production processes and kinds of labour have been installed as a necessary approach to optimising activities. Indeed, it is a part of improving the individual's effort (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Raffnsøe, 2010). This challenge confronts everybody from students to the unemployed over researchers to knowledge labourers, insofar as they are scrutinized and critically evaluated so as to initiate permanent self-evaluation in the modern audit-society (Power, 1999).

In extension of critique becoming such an obvious, overriding, but also ambiguous norm, observers note that it may turn into its own caricature. Barbara Johnson makes the observation that the two words '*critical*' and '*difference*' "*both range from an objective, disinterested function of discrimination* ('distinction', 'careful and exact evaluation') *to an argumentative or agonistic function of condemnation* ('a disagreement or quarrel,' judging severely, censuring')" (Johnson, 1981, p. ix). There are reservations about critique being a negative, knee-jerk reaction, or habit, where the evaluator first and foremost confirms himself as an auspicious existence, all the while he risks destroying everything in his way. According to Raymond Williams' entry on 'Criticism', critique and criticism have acquired "*a predominant sense* (…) *of fault-finding*, [which refers to] *a habit,* (…) *which depends, fundamentally, on the abstraction of response from its real situation and circumstances*" (Williams, 1985, p. 84-86).

Taking the form of a generalized self-contained negative and derogatory attitude no matter the circumstances, critique may above all serve self-affirmation and self-interest. This attitude may become a launching pad and a safeguard for the literary critic or the investigative reporter, even as an iconoclastic avant-garde artist or art critic may use this ready-made mold as stage setting and as a mask. Furthermore, it may at times seem to be a sufficiently wide-spread attitude to mark public opinion at large, to such an extent that the public sphere, instead of designating a space for rational discussion of public matters (Habermas, 1987), risks becoming a vehicle for display of suspicion and distrust.

A critical, negative theoretical self-affirmation also occurs when various strands of *Critical Management Studies* repeatedly celebrate themselves as a privileged, insightful, and penetrating academic position, which is better than existing managerial and organizational practices or mainstream theory (Chan & Garrick, 2002; Wray-Bliss, 2002; Hassard & Rowlinson, 2001; Fournier & Grey, 2000). Since Critical Management studies conceive

the order of organizational life as a regime that manages, controls, and "*produces submission and compliance*" (Jackson & Carter, 1998, p. 60) without reflection - generally bordering on a state of stupidity (Alvesson, Bridgman & Willmott, 2009) - such practices are rather disparaged *en bloch* (Raffnsøe, 2015b). Thus, the critic seems explicitly or implicitly to claim a privileged societal and epistemological position. Often, such a tradition may even come to believe that it has posited a critique merely by having pointed out a power relationship or having analysed certain uses of power.

Voiced in this manner, the critical approach borders on a generalized and self-affirming stance to the world. Approaching the object or the field of investigation from the outside and beyond, the critic here tends to look for evidence corroborating his own privileged insight, a position of superiority posited at the outset as the condition of possibility of the examination.

Concluding in its own supposable self-corroborating disappointment with the world, this hermeneutics of arrogance may be regarded a caricature and a distortion, but also one possible offshoot of critical position as it is voiced in what Ricoeur has termed 'the school of suspicion' (Ricoeur, 1965, p. 40). Understanding 'interpretation' and hermeneutics as essentially "*an exercise of suspicion*", this school may tend to approach the given according to "*the negative formula*" that existing truth should at least initially be perceived and understood as 'lie (mensonge)' that should be dismantled by "*the invention of an art of interpretation*" and "*a 'destructive' critique*" (Ricoeur, 1965, p. 40-41). Among the makers and 'masters' of this hermeneutics of suspicion and critique, Ricoeur lists Marx, Nietzsche and Freud (Ricoeur, 1965, p. 40-44) only to add Heidegger and Derrida (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 363). Insofar as exposing false consciousness and other forms of entrapment in systems of domination or dependence is an essential concern for later critical theory, its proponents may also be listed among the contributors to this school of critical hermeneutics (Habermas & Apel, 1980; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1992; Habermas, 1968). Despite the necessity of its critique, such critical hermeneutics may at times transform into a problematic habitual practice of criticism or a uniform posture of critical dogmatism (Sedgwick & Frank, 2003).

In short, critique has today not only become crucial and ubiquitous, but also somewhat problematic, and at times even devastating.

The Continued Commitment to Critique

Further problematizing the self-evident status of critique, the sociologist of knowledge and anthropologist Bruno Latour raises the question of whether or not critique "*has run out of steam*" (Latour, 2004), insofar as it seems an instrument that is no longer adequate in managing contemporary challenges. However, the mentioned difficulties or challenges do not lead to a simple rejection of the critical spirit, rather the challenge is to reactivate or renew the troubled modality of critique, through pointing out how "*critique has not been critical enough*" (Latour, 2004, p. 232). That critique is often difficult to practice and even verify, does therefore not imply that it must be left behind. Rather it must be taken up, improved, and re-operationalized in a more concrete format.

In so many words, critique still seems as decisive and incontrovertible as during the Enlightenment, all the while it seems more problematic and vague. It has become as much a problem that raises many new questions. How does one perform critique today? What are its formats? What is the truly critical attitude?

In an attempt to attain an overview of this abundance of critique and get past the widely disseminated negative and polemical critique, the rest of the article proceeds in the following way. After a short account of the prehistory of critique, it returns to and explicates the three basic modalities of critique that can be found since the inception of the concept as a general requirement with Kant. An interesting and challenging feature of the three modalities of critique that has been handed down is that critique is still viewed as an affirmative or positive activity. This however, does not prevent them from relating to each other in a critical and negative way.

The Prehistory of Critique

Before Kant generalised the term 'critique' and put it to use as an overall characterisation of his time, the concept denoted an important ability and then always as a competence, which related to, and entered as an important and yet limited element in a specific field.

In Greek antiquity the critical art [1]was very much viewed as the ability to distinguish, evaluate, and reach decisions. One important area was jurisprudence (Raffnsøe, 2002, p. 146-222). In this area critique denoted the ability to form judgement and arrive at a decision in a specific disputed judicial case.

In this way, the critical attitude distinguished itself from a contemplative and perceptive and intuitive theoretical attitude. However critique not only distinguished itself from theory in the judicial field, but also came to mean the ability of reaching a decision and laying out guidelines for future considerations, particularly in epistemological, political, and ethical controversies. In Plato's *Theaitetos*, Socrates is therefore able to emphasise how "*the most demanding and beautiful task*" for the philosophical midwife is to distinguish the true[2] from that which is not (Plato, 2006). In terms of medicine, the concept - along with the related term *krisis* – could denote the turning point in the progression of an illness. This would then be the point at which the decision between life and death was made, between improvement and deterioration. In general there was therefore a tendency to view *krisis* as the event (what happened), while *kritik* was the reaction (what could be done). During the time of Rome and Hellenism, *Kritikos* and *criticus* became increasingly about philological evaluation.

In the 15th and 16th century critique was taken up once again as an element in various areas. In philology, it denoted the scholar's cultivated ability to distinguish truth from falsehood in written sources handed down from previous ages. Later in this period, critique also came to be used in logic as the ability to analyse and evaluate that made the application of logic possible to begin with. In poetics it appeared as meaning the ability to develop value judgements when ranking certain works as better or worse than others, or in evaluating individual plays or novels.

Over the course of the 17th and 18th century the idea of critique was less and less embedded in various sub-fields and activities and was rather generalised, until it became an activity that could surface everywhere. The scope of application for critique was no longer merely logical judgements, aesthetics, or poetics. All kinds of knowledge - even issues

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[1] "Kritike techne"
[2] "Krinein to alethes"

pertaining more widely to state and society - must be established such that they could be subjected to critique.

The consequence of this can be found in what was a much read 'modern Glossary' developed by the English author Henry Fielding in the 1752-edition of his journal *The Covent Garden Journal*. Here, under the entry 'CRITIC', he ironically notes "*Like* Homo*, a name common to all human Race*" (Fielding, 1810, p. 36). Critique hereby seems to be something that characterizes Homo Sapiens in general. In correspondence with this, one finds the article 'Critique' from The French Encyclopedia, written by the historian Jean François Marmontel, which also characterises critique as an "*enlightened examination[3] and just evaluation*" that can be directed towards "*all products of human creativity*", "*an infinite area*'" (Diderot & Alembert, 1979).

However, the critical faculty could not just be chosen at random in an age which the contemporary Anglo-American propagandist Thomas Paine, a founding father of the United States of America, characterised as *The Age of Reason*. The touchstone for testing the purity or longevity of anything handed down or existing, was reason, a common sense with which - according to Descartes - men were equally endowed (Descartes & Gilson, 1962, p. 2).

The Generalization of Critique in Kant

Kant's Critical Self-Reflection in the Age of Criticism

While Kant, as mentioned, uses the term at the beginning of his critical philosophy to characterise not only the general and decisive crux, which reveals what is irrational in the given, but also to explicate what makes his own position unique, he also adds something completely new. The critical judgement of reason is generalised so that it is directed at all areas of existence, wherefore Kant also directs it at reason itself. Now reason must regain its own composure, as it moderates and limits itself.

Kant emphasises how critique must base itself on reason's universal judgments concerning its surroundings, but critique is likewise radicalised since he stresses the necessity of the critical judgment of reason being directed at the critical faculty - reason itself. Rational critique is therefore not only a decisive faculty, which allows one to distinguish substantiated cognition from what only seems to be valid knowledge. Rational critique must therefore become a form of 'self-examination'[4] and consequently self-critique (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 13).

Already in the first sentences of *The Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant points out that the very same human reason, which can form judgements about its surroundings has been "*burdened by questions which it cannot decline, as they are imposed upon it by its own nature*". These are issues that it cannot fully answer, since they transcend the own abilities of the mind, and yet cannot ignore (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 11).

This situation occurs when reason transcends the limits of what we as people can experience and therefore can attain knowledge about. Instead we enter upon a series of foundational, speculative and often contradictory assumptions. Kant gives the example of

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[3] "Examen éclairé"
[4] "Selbsterkenntnis"

when reason asks the following questions: Is the world finite or infinite? Is everything that happens determined by causality or does freedom play a role? Can we prove the existence of God? (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 409-19; Kant, 1781/1976, p. 427-39; p. 523-28).

If reason is unable to direct critique towards itself and its own attempts at knowledge - especially concerning areas that are not well founded – it risks entanglement in speculative dogma, where it confuses unfounded assumptions with insight into the basic constitution of the world. According to Kant, this has been the case for metaphysics and philosophy up till that time. Without sufficient self-critique, reason tends to become a tool in the hands of dogma which itself is 'despotic' (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 12) insofar as it, like an absolute power of state, requires obedience without the possibility of freely recognising its commands. In this case, reason becomes a faculty that strings us along with 'illusory knowledge' and therefore is not on par with its own more basic and refined time (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 13).

In extension of this, critique appears – in its judgement over and cleansing of pure reason – first and foremost as a negative faculty in Kant's work. It concerns training and regulating reason, when it – as a wild and untamed force of nature – tends towards "*transcending the limits of experience*" (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 29-30). Such a critical faculty is useful in force of its ability to point out limits that should not be transgressed, show us the necessity respecting the boundaries, and the unfortunate consequences of not following its guidance. In this sense, critique is a kind of negative limitation, since it indicates areas that one should keep within and indeed ensures that this advice is followed.

With Kant's conception of critique, it becomes clear how the will to know that attained a temporary peak in the Enlightenment, now comes to question and recognise the limits of itself as a vital internal question for rational cognition itself.

Differentiating Critique

According to Kant however, this negative limitation or boundary is also connected to positive features. This becomes apparent as soon as one realizes that the basic axioms followed by reason in its venture beyond boundaries do not entail an expansion, but rather a limitation of reason. In such a usage of reason, thinking takes an outset in what applies to sense cognition and expands this to apply beyond its own limits. Strictly speaking, reason hereby becomes a vehicle for the supremacy of the senses and experience over all other areas of existence (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 29-30). If reason does not recognise its own limitation, it can therefore not recognise its own positive side, whereby it comes to damage itself and its own reasonable functions.

As Kant sees it, the critique of reason is at once a limitation and an affirmation or strengthening of reason. In order to clarify this, he uses the following analogy. One might as well claim that the police – which for Kant had the 'merely' negative task to, "*bring an end to the violence which citizen has to apprehend from citizen*[5]" (Kant, 1981/1976, p. 30) – had no positive use. When the police limits individual activity, however, this is intimately connected with a positive benefit, namely establishing a boundary between the various members of the community, which makes it possible for each individual to follow his or

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[5] "Der Gewalttätigkeit welche Bürger von Bürgern zu besorgen haben, einen Riegel vorzuschieben."

her own goals in a sensible manner: "*so each and every one may pursue his vocation in peace and security*[6]", as Kant puts it the preface to the second edition (Kant, 1981/1976, p. 30). It is only through the negative limitation that the positive aims of some particular feature become possible.

In force of setting boundaries for speculative-dogmatic misuses of reason, critique allows us to follow and unfold another aspect of the self in a purer format. This is the "*pure (practical) use of reason*", the particularity of which the speculative reason threatens to displace, if it is allowed to extend itself without limit (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 29-30).

In this practical use of reason, knowledge of the empirical, positive and experiential is no longer the most important. Rather, reason is directed towards a new irreducible dimension. Since reason is free to relate specifically and practically, it emphasises another kind of truth, which cannot merely be founded upon what is given in experience. It is a kind of truth which has to do with a practical outset: reason begins to examine which basic principles a human rational being must model its will and actions upon, regardless of the actual, experiential reality it finds itself in.

In connection with practical reason - especially following *The Critique of Practical Reason* and *Groundwork of the Metaphysic(s) of Morals* - critique becomes a 'tribunal' or 'court' (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 13), which without prejudice submits "*what reason urgently recommends us*" (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 673) a judgement to decide to what degree and on what conditions it can apply as binding for practical action (Kant, 1800/1978, p. 99).

According to Kant, freedom is a decisive and necessary condition that we cannot avoid to presuppose and depend on (Kant, 1800/1978, p. 99). The critical examination determines that we can only understand our reason as having an effect and a practical impact on what we do and carry into effect to the extent that we take freedom for granted. Kant emphasises this when he underlines that: "*practical is anything that is possible through freedom*" (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 673). However, this freedom is not merely to be conceived as a '*brutish*' '*haphazardness*' where we are randomly determined by our sensual drives (Kant, 1976 IV, p. 675). As Kant sees it, it is first possible to speak of free will in the proper sense of the term when there is self-determination, i.e. where what is done, is done because of the motivations, that reason itself indicates. In this sense, critique of practical reason holds that practical action becomes practical in a commitment to something which is more remote and transcends sensual inclinations as a "*prescription that guides conduct*[7]" (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 675).

The effect of such moral precepts or maxims from something other and higher can, according to Kant, undeniably be found in our experience (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 675). Still, this recognition does not take the shape of affirming what actually happens, as is the case in the everyday positive knowledge, but of an assertion or statement that indicates, "*what should or must happen, even if it may never take place*" (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 675). In extension we can only cognise and experience practical reason in the shape of an activity in regard to us, not as a being in itself. In a practical context, reason appears not as a determination of conditions for what is, but as an indication of what ought to or should happen.

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[6] "Damit ein jeder seine Angelegenheit ruhig und sicher treiben können"
[7] "Vorschrift des Verhaltens"

Unlike what was the case in the critique of theoretical reason, practical reason does not need a critique of pure reason. As Kant explains in the preface to *The Critique of Practical Reason,* there was a need to criticise reason when it transgressed its own limitations in order to be able to affirm it. In regard to the critique of practical reason, critique no longer concerns pointing out the limits of reason, but of explicating and describing its influence. This is a positive issue of proving how the practical reason in and of itself contains an undeniable 'reality' as an 'event' (Kant, 1800/1978, p. 107). Pure practical reason has an irreducible reality, already in force of it directly affecting us. The aim is therefore not to remind us that thought must avoid unconfounded speculation and limit itself to investigate what we experience is the case. Instead, the critique of practical reason helps us distinguish and articulate an idea about what undeniably affects us, as it challenges what is immediately given.

The Various Meanings of Critique in Post-Kantian Thought

Kant's account concerning the modalities of critique is not only relevant for understanding his own authorship. At a time when critique has reached an overarching importance, he lays out the basis for a typology, which has far reaching consequences as he begins to distinguish two different modalities of critique described above. Kant opens a space, within which the following conceptions of critique seem to be situated. When critique after Kant attempts to map the reason of reason, it has moved along and expanded upon two basic routes that he, standing at the parting of the ways, pointed out as possible and desirable.

Critique as theoretical determination

An initial and core tradition in critique has – in extension of Kant's first critique - taken an outset in established forms of scientific knowledge that are perceived as exemplary cases of well-established rational and sound knowledge that one can rest on. The aim has been to bring these as witnesses before a critical tribunal in order to examine and determine what characterises and justifies them. In this particular tradition of critique, articulation of established knowledge and its rationality is connected with a limitation from various kinds of dogma or irrationality which merely pretend to be knowledge, but also a defence against faulty conception of what characterizes real knowledge.

Basic groundwork for this notion of critique was already laid before Kant. As modern sciences developed during the period from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, partly in opposition to inherited dogmas and knowledge, the requirement was set out for the practitioners to discern and justify how the new knowledge-making practices differed from the old (Koyré, 1988; Kuhn, 2003; Kuhn & Hacking 2012; Shapin, 1996; Raffnsøe, 2015b).

From Kant this critical orientation stretches over the post-Kantians, the positivism of August Comte (Comte & Littré, 2005), the empiricism of John Stuart Mill (Mill, 1886; Mill, 1878), partly Edmund Husserl's phenomenology (Husserl, 1980), through to the Vienna Circle and logical positivism as it is expressed by the physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach and the mathematical logician and philosopher Rudolph Carnap (Carnap, 1995), as well as the critical rationalism which is found with the philosopher of science Karl Popper (Popper, 1966a; Popper, 1968; Popper, 1966b). Likewise, we find central figures in the French epistemological tradition, such as the mathematician Gaston Bachelard (Bachelard,

1977; Canguilhem, 1971; Bachelard, 1975), the Russian-French philosopher of science Alexandre Koyré (Koyré & Redondi, 1986) and the French physicist and philosopher Georges Canguilhem (Canguilhem, 1971; Canguilhem, 1998; Canguilhem, 1966), just as core actors from structuralism, such as the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (Saussure & Mauro, 1973) and the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, contribute here. In general, this tradition includes most of the philosophy of science, which replaces philosophical episte-mology after Kant.

Critique as Practical Articulation and Safeguarding

In a different path, which stretches from Kant's later critiques, distinguishing the bounda-ry between what can be known with certainty and what cannot be known still plays an important role, but now in a new way. Here the issue is not primarily to demark the limit between true and false knowledge, but rather to go to the boundary of established knowledge in order to question what this knowledge has not taken into account. In this tradition there is an emphasis upon the practical dimension and on articulating this as an irreducible dimension over and against the theoretical. This critical tradition points to-wards how, and in regard to theoretical cognition, an ethical dimension is always already present, by asking what should happen to and with regard to what we already know, alt-hough it may never come to be. On the boundary of what we know and are sure of, this kind of critique also posits questions as to our existing polity and community.

The second main tradition of critique, in which one takes up a position on the edge of es-tablished knowledge and understanding, can itself be divided into two tracks, depending on the manner in which they articulate an irreducible dimension. While one track recurs to and advances an irreducible, homogenic, practical dimension, the other indicates a hetero-genic and inconclusive normative dimension. The first track takes its outset in Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysic(s) of Morals* and *The Critique of Practical Reason,* which evolves into modern critical theory as it is monumentally formulated in the work of the German social theoretician Jürgen Habermas. At the centre of this effort we find an at-tempt to develop the hidden standards of critique, such that they take up a positive and verifiable format. Already in *Erkenntnis und Interesse,* Habermas is able to see the crisis of epistemology as stemming from a growing distinction between positive science and normative considerations after Kant (Habermas, 1968, p. 11-14). In his *Theorie des kom-munikativen Handelns*, Habermas seeks positive guidelines to be followed when formulating ethical imperatives (Habermas, 1981). The positive exposition of exemplary guidelines and the integrative dimension of normative claims to validity (Geltung) are crucial (Habermas, 1992) to such a critical project.

His heir within critical theory, Alex Honneth, stresses that for Habermas *"critique is only possible as immanent critique. As an object of critique, society must already comprise the reason[8], which can then serve as standard for the critique of societal circumstances[9]"*, (Celikates 2009b, interview with Luc Boltanski and Axel Honneth 'Soziologie der Kritik oder Kritische Theorie', 90, in Jaeggi & Wesche 2009, p. 81-133). In extension of this, Honneth is still able to emphasise how *"the future of social philosophy today is dependent upon the ability to justify ethical judgment concerning the necessary conditions for a hu-*

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[8] "Jene Vernunft beeinhalten"
[9] "Als Standard der Kritik existierender gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse dienen kann"

man life well lived", all the while he presents the prehistory of founding such a critical theory, which begins with Rousseau and moves on through, Hegel, Marx, and Hannah Arendt, as well contemporary figures, such as Aristotelian moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum and Canadian social philosopher Charles Taylor (Honneth in Rasmussen, 1996, p. 393-94).

Critique as a Venture of Reflective Judgment

In the second main track and thus the third tradition, one likewise takes up a position at the edge of established knowledge by applying critical thought to open a practical dimension, in order to allow something different to have an effect upon the given. Unlike the first main track in this tradition, however, there is no ambition to retain a practical perspective by presenting explicit standards, rather there is the approach of pointing out overlooked or hidden aspects of reality, which challenges our knowledge about how we act as individuals or as communities. A primary representative of this tradition is the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (cfr. Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, and Sørensen, 2016a, p. 18-20, p. 445-454). He is able to point out how he has worked on the formation of various kinds of knowledge and their implications (Foucault, 1994, p. 440-83). Unlike a traditional history of science, however, Foucault conducts such an examination to simultaneously thematise how these formats of knowledge and rationality – in addition to being binding and rational - are also the consequence of a "*fragile and precarious history*", which is characterised by openings and ruptures (Foucault, 1994, p. 440-83). In this manner, critical thought is able to give an account of how a practical dimension is already present in what is being studied – initially in the shape of a freedom, which Kant gave as a prerequisite for this dimension to create new ways of relating.

Critique hereby becomes inherent and affirmative, since it takes an outset in a necessary rupture in the examined knowledge in order to confirm this movement. In force of actively pursuing this movement on its way and examining its further possible direction, critique transcends this movement from within. Through its confirmation of an ongoing historical movement, critique is able to actively seek out its boundary – not only boundaries that condition it, but also boundaries that it points towards. All the while Foucault determines critique as a certain kind of '*critical attitude*' (Foucault, 1990, p. 37), wherefore he can characterise this virtue or ethos as a '*limit attitude*' (Foucault, 1994, p. 574).

In one wants to open and affirm a practical dimension, it is insufficient to define freedom as openness, according to both Foucault and Kant. This merely allows for an indeterminacy, uncertainty, and possibly aestheticism. Foucault therefore also characterises the "*historical-critical work upon ourselves*" as '*experimental*', since it "*must on the one hand open up a realm of historical inquiry and, on the other, put itself to the test of reality, of contemporary reality, both to grasp the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take*" (Foucault, 1994, p. 574; Foucault, 2003a, p. 54). In this regard, Foucault emphasises in 1984 how he allowed himself to be inspired "*by the very specific transformations that have proved to be possible for the last twenty years in a certain number of areas which concern our ways of being and thinking, relations to authority, relations between the sexes, the way in which we perceive insanity or illness*" (Foucault, 1994, p. 574; Foucault, 2003a, p. 54). Here one leaves behind the established grounds of validity, since one begins to consider ones own thought and being as an object of practical-ethical self-formation. Consequently, one begins to create and commit to new normative guidelines. Foucault can therefore also argue that the

critical attitude should "*move beyond the outside-inside alternative*" (Foucault, 1994, p. 574; Foucault, 2003a, p. 54) by beginning to perceive the limits of that which is well known and familiar as a threshold or transition to something new.

In sum, Foucault understands critique not only as connected to the question "*what, therefore, am I, I who belong to this humanity, perhaps to this piece of it, at this point in time, at this instant of humanity*" (Foucault, 1990, p. 46), but as equally linked to the "*historical-practical testing of the limits that we may be able to transcend*" and "*thus as a work on ourselves as free beings*" (Foucault, 2003a, p. 54). Suggesting consequently the "*art not to be governed quite so much*" as a "*first definition of critique*" (Foucault, 1990, p. 38), Foucault sees the critical '*attitude*' or '*virtue*' as a way to reassume the heritage of the Enlightenment, at least in so far as Kant determined this as a the urgent exhortation to seek to leave the easy, lazy and pusillanimous dependence on "*foreign guidance or government*[10]" and to "*have the courage to use your own understanding*" (Kant, 1783/1978, p. 53; cf. also Cook, 2013).

As Honneth, Foucault is able to list various contributors to this tradition. He points out how, from the Hegelian Left to the Frankfurt School, there has been a complete critique of positivism, objectivism, rationalization of *techne* and technicalization, a whole critique of the relationships between the fundamental project of science and techniques whose objective was to show the connections between science's naive presumptions, on one hand, and the forms of domination characteristic of contemporary society, on the other (Foucault, 1990, p. 42; Foucault, 2003a, p. 269). Foucault also points to Max Weber, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger as frontrunners in this tradition.

At closer inspection, however, one can see – already in Kant's third critique – an outline of this conception. In the introduction to *The Critique of Judgment* from 1790, Kant emphasises how his two previous critiques open up an '*immeasurable chasm*' (Kant, 1790/1978, p. 83) between the world as it appears in positive experience and the world as it appears in the practical uses of reason. If it is not possible to find a '*crossing*' or '*transition*' between these different worlds, it creates the problem that it is impossible to conceive how the ethical dimension applies to the positively cognised reality.

Kant seeks to bridge this gap by examining the perspectives on the world, where the person primarily relates to his own human mode of conception, while remaining open. In such cases one may experience discomfort, but also - sometimes – elation or happiness. Kant emphasises cases of experiencing art or nature, or his own experience of the French Revolution, as connected to these feelings. Kant interprets this happiness as expressing that the observer of these objects or events is pleased that there is an opening where the moral perspective can attain '*objective reality*' and therefore actually come to affect experience (Kant, 1790/1978, p. 233-34). With his critique of judgement, Kant seeks to give a positive account, development and judgement of how such human ways of conceiving and evaluating the world at the same time demonstrates how a moral dimension exerts an influence upon our existence. At the same time, such an ethical dimension cannot in these cases have a direct effect in the shape of moral requirements. They can only exert an influence in a preliminarily incomplete and indirect way, namely as they affect and make themselves felt in our ways of relating to each other and ourselves.

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[10] "Fremder Führung"

As is the case in Kant's third critique, the concern of critique is situated in the encounter between theory and practice and becomes a positive development of a normativity that one is in the process of developing and tries to approach. These are hereby norms which one must attempt to explore, develop and make felt without knowing them in their final or complete form.

In this manner, Kant in his critical philosophy manages to explore ideas of aesthetic and practical forms of critique in addition his previous presentation of the basic outlines of epistemic and moral forms of critique.

Critique as Affirmative Forestallment

In the context of a reading of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* published under the title *Die Frage nach dem Ding,* Heidegger heavily stresses the affirmative character of critique in Kant's work. Here, according to Heidegger, *"the sense of the term "critique" is so little negative that it means the most positive of the positive*[11]*, the positing*[12] *of what must be established in advance in all positing*[13] *as what is determinative and decisive*[14]*"* (Heidegger, 1987, p. 93). Only in a derivative sense does critique acquire a negative meaning: Since such positing of what is decisive and determinative implies a *"separation, an emphasizing and lifting out of the special*[15]*"*, it carries with it *"a refutation of the usual and ordinary*[16]*"* (Heidegger, 1987, p. 93). Critique means *"to lift out that of a special sort*[17]*"*, *"to establish or designate what something tries to measure up to and should be measured by*[18]*"* (Heidegger, 1987, p. 93). According to Heidegger, this understanding of critique remains decisive for Kant's use of critique in all his major works.

In the wake of Kant's generalization of critique, the German poet, art-critic, and essayist Friedrich Schlegel voiced certain implications of the affirmative conception of immanent critique that is on its way in all three kinds of critique. According to Schlegel, *"the true assignment and the inner being of critique*[19]*"* is *"to characterize*[20]*"* that which is under consideration (Schlegel & Arndt, 2007, p. 161); and accordingly '*characterisation*[21]' is to be considered the true *"work of art*[22]*"* of critique (Schlegel & Eichner, 1967, p. 253; Schlegel & Huyssen, 2005, p. 139).

Since the object investigated is imperfect and remains a fragment, however, the characterization must necessarily consider the work in relationship to its own perfection, which remains partly hidden, insofar as the work only manages to present and realize it imperfectly. As criticism approaches its own ideal of being a comprehensive and thorough

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[11] "Das Positivste des Positiven"
[12] "Setzung"
[13] "Setzung"
[14] "Als das Bestimmende und Entscheidende"
[15] "Absonderung und Heraushebung des Besonderen"
[16] "Zurückweisung des Gewöhnlichen und Ungemässen"
[17] "Das Besondere herausheben"
[18] "Festsetzung des Massgebenden"
[19] "Das eigentliche Geschäft und innere Wesen der Kritik"
[20] "Charakterisieren"
[21] "Charakteristik"
[22] "Kunstwerk"

characterization of the work in the fullest sense of the word, the need of critique to point beyond the work in its present state towards a fuller realization of itself manifests itself all the more conspicuously.

According to Schlegel, then, '*true critique*' must be understood as "*an author raised to the second power*[23]" (Schlegel, 1988, paragraph 35, p. 927). True critique works as a '*creator*[24]' (Schlegel & Eichner, 1967, paragraph 68, p. 155), re-creating and re-writing what it characterizes and evaluates in the light of what it already seems on the verge of realizing. Insofar as it spurs a drive to improve and perfect an impetus already in place in the evaluated, critique must also be considered a productive activity in the form of an intensification or a potentiation of what is already on its way (Raffnsøe, 2013a, p. 256).

In contradistinction to "*hypercritizism*[25], *which only attaches importance to criticism*[26] *and rejects all content and (…)* *sticks to Kant's method without adhering to his results and what he had in mind*[27]" (Schlegel & Arndt 2007, p. 64), true critique is first and foremost to be considered an affirmation, a '*visum and repertum*' (Schlegel & Huyssen, 2005, p. 139) of that which presents itself to the arbiter. Critique is not so much "*a commenting on an already present, completed literature that has finished flowering*[28]", but "*the organon of a literature that is yet to be perfected, formed, even has yet to begin*" (Schlegel & Arndt, 2007, p. 176). To re-affirm what is present, critique must also make a separation or distinguish between what is determinative or decisive and what can be left behind. By implication, then, critique also acquires a negative aspect and contains an element of distantiation. Still, even this negative aspect serves as an affirmation of what is already rampant in the evaluated.

What appears as crucial for and is affirmed in the critical judgment is not the factual or the counter-factual, but instead another very real and momentous aspect of the world: the virtual (Raffnsøe, 2013a, p. 249). The virtual is not simply to be conceived of as the possible, but as a level of existence that is already operative in the present as a force (virtus), making itself felt as something that acts in and through the given (Leibniz, 1898, p. 26-27; Deleuze, 1996; Deleuze, 1988). As critical performativity, the level of the virtual is continually effective in and through what is observable, as it causes the present to transcend itself and unfold in certain determinate directions and disposes us to act, think, anticipate, and experiment in certain new ways, calling for further exploration. What is affirmed in critical judgment is not what is already fully present and at hand (Heidegger, 1979, §43c), but something that is on its way and makes itself felt as it exercises a guiding or piloting role, affecting and working through what is presented.

Philosophy and Critique

Overall, it is obvious how all three types of critique take on a positive and affirmative character. A negative effort to distance and distinguish oneself from what is given or appears by identifying mistakes and limitations does not form the starting point for the

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[23] "Ein Autor in der 2t Potenz"
[24] "Urheber"
[25] "Hyperkritizism"
[26] "Das Kritizieren"
[27] "Seinen Geist"
[28] "Commentar einer schon vorhandenen, vollendeten, verblühten (…) Literatur"

critical endeavour; nor does critique seek to promote itself and distinguish itself by subsuming what is already present under one's already given conceptions.

Instead critique centres upon an effort to handle and care for something, which is taken to be decisive, whether this is forming a scientific agenda, retaining necessary normative guidelines or a pragmatic and practical examination of what we can become as finite humans. The critical distinction and judgment is in all cases primarily a way of emphasising, shaping and unfolding a more differentiated understanding of something important that presents itself, often also by placing it in a larger context and in regard to its surroundings.

Thus the critical judgment takes an outset in and is based upon a certain openness in regard to surroundings. It does not function as a theoretical and distant determination of an object or a practice that is assessed from the outside, but as an attempt to form a relatively unprejudiced judgement that takes what is to be assessed as its starting point to determine what is at stake.

At closer inspection then, critical judgment in Kant, Schlegel, and their critical aftermath does not respect the is-ought dichotomy or *Hume's law,* stating that one cannot make normative judgements (about what ought to be) based on positive premises or suppositions (about what is) (Hume, Selby-Bigge & Nidditch, 1978, III, § 1), quite the contrary! Respecting *Hume's Guillotine* in so far as it recognizes that the step from what is the case to what ought or should be is never inferential, but experiential and reflective, critical thought, as it is present everywhere in the critical part of Kant's oeuvre of exceptional consequence for posterity, nevertheless constantly strives to bridge and traverse the gulf between 'is' and 'ought'. Neither does critical judgement rest on and affirm the absence of normativity and fundamental value freedom as the basis for sound judgement, experience, and recognition - quite the contrary! Instead critical judgment presupposes, testifies to, and affirms the constant impact of normative scales and measures as the *condition sine qua non* of critique and judgment, even when they are only presented incompletely or indirectly.

In contradistinction to a widespread tendency in modern avant-garde culture and critical theory to regard critique as a distantiation from what is already given, this conception of a generalized immanent critique resumes crucial elements of ancient Greek ideas of critique. Here the critical art (*kritike techne*) was primarily understood as the ability to discern (*ho kritikos*) what comes to the fore and is crucially at stake not only in the ongoing development of the physical body, but also in the body politics, especially at certain vital and ambiguous turning points (*krises*), in order to estimate and pass sentence on (*to krinein*) what asserts itself within this setting. In this sense, the art of critical distinction and judgment is closely related to the art of healing and consummation, but also approaches and forestalls the just and the juridical, ethics and politics as these considerations come forward before critique's court of justice.

With his dictum, placed in a footnote in the preface to the first edition of his first critique, that "*our time is the true age of criticism to which everything must be subjected*" (Kant, 1978/1976, p. 13), Kant affirms the generalization of critique that implies that every subject or concern must be able to appear and make itself heard as a case at the tribunal or court of critique; and in his critical philosophy, he confirms, unfolds and further articulates the consequences of the affirmation of the dissemination of critique.

With this generalization of critique, philosophy and critique become closely tied together, to the extent that critique is perceived as the most essential philosophical activity that lays

the groundwork for the philosophical '*edifice*[29]' in general (Kant, 1790/1978). Philosophy essentially becomes critical philosophy. Concomitantly, critique begins to be perceived as an activity and a faculty that no longer simply works under the auspices of other principles, in particular reason. As critique becomes all-encompassing and potentially all-including, this leads to the problem that the critical faculty can no longer resort to foreign principles, but at the end of the day is forced to establish its own principles and conceptualize itself as it goes along (Kant, 1790/1978, p. 75). "*The perplexity about a principle (Verlegenheit wegen eines Prinzips)*" (Kant, 1790/1978, p. 75) does not imply a complete absence of guiding principles, but leads to an ongoing search for the measures of critical judgment.

The Ubiquity of Affirmative Critique

A reversal of the inward turn that constituted Platonic philosophy is instigated with the dissemination of critique and perceptible in Kant's philosophy. According to "*the son of a noble and burly midwife*", Socrates, "*the most demanding and beautiful task*[30]" that sets the philosophical midwife apart from other midwifes and the rest of the world is a certain art and ability (*techne*), "*practiced upon men, not women*", by "*tending to their souls in labour not their bodies*" (Plato, 2005, p. 149a, p. 150b). Plato ascribes the view to Socrates that even more important than bringing ordinary children to the world is this art and ability to "*distinguish between what is true and what is not*[31]" that is characteristic of philosophy and enables to help bringing '*real children*' to the world and not '*mere images*' in order to turn to and concentrate exclusively on what is true and real (Plato, 2005, p. 150b). Based on the Platonic decision to turn one's back on the world - its doxa, deception, and disappointment – in order to face and take possession of a privileged, esoteric, dogmatic, scholastic, theoretical knowledge and its certitude, this withdrawn and introverted contemplation of the essential in itself remains an indispensable component of the traditional philosophical love of wisdom in the form of a will to know and a desire for truth from Antiquity (Aristotle, 1933) through the Middle Ages and early Modernity (Descartes & Gilson, 1962).

When critique is generalized and attains the status of a defining feature of philosophy, however, there occurs a reversal of this inwardly oriented reactive turn in the form of a more extrovert outward-oriented affirmative spiral. Taking the form of continued criticism, philosophy dissociates itself from the dogmatic slumber and the scandal of its ostensible contradiction with itself that marked previous philosophy and its withdrawal into itself as metaphysics and epistemology as a result of the Platonic Pyrrhonian victory (Cavell, 1988; Cavell, 1979). As critique attains its modern generalization with critical philosophy, critical philosophy "*is able to make claims that exceed the particular disciplinary domain of the philosophical*" (Butler, 2012, p. 11). In extension of this move, philosophy now becomes *incontournable* in a new disseminated form, insofar as it reappears as an inherent, possibly all-pervading immanent '*critical*' tendency to speculative self-transgression and self-problematization, which dawns within various other fields of experience. It seems essential and inevitable to examine, discern, estimate, and pass sen-

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[29] "Gebäude"
[30] "Megiston te kai kalliston ergon"
[31] "To krinein to alethes te kai me"

tence on what is at stake in theoretical fields of knowledge and science. This is also the case in practical-political interactions, and sensual-esthetical processes of value-creation and matters of taste, insofar as these fields always already seem to invoke the intervention of critical reflection on what is already at bay within these fields and where it might lead us (Raffnsøe, 2013b).

The Ubiquity of the Question and (Self-)Affirmation of the Human

Accordingly, each field in question is not to be considered a limited field of interest that could be maneuvered so as to be regarded and possessed in isolation; and this is not only due to the ubiquity of critical reflection in itself, as Kant makes clear in publications based on his teaching at the very end of his oeuvre. Prolonging discussions initiated in his first critique (Kant, 1781/1976, p. 677), Kant's *Logic* does not content itself with pointing out how each differentiated field is pervaded by and raises fundamental critical questions, such as '*What can I know?*', '*What must I do?*', and '*What can I hope for?*'; here Kant proceeds by stressing how each field and its related question points to, concerns itself with, and bears on the basic anthropological question: '*What is man?*' (Kant, 1800/1978, p. 447-48). Thus, with the distribution of critique in Kant, the question of the human, conceived as the origin of the critical faculty, becomes omnipresent as implicated in every other examination. Knowledge and reflection on the world is, in each and every instance, also to be understood as knowledge and reflection concerning the human.

At first glance, knowledge and reflection concerning human existence can, of course, be understood in the sense of an objective or subjective genitive - as either knowledge of man or as man's knowledge. In the first case, knowledge would also permit a utilization of man, while in the last case knowledge would be at man's disposal. As Kant makes clear though, the question '*What is man?*', in which all other basic questions seem to come together, is neither the question '*What is man as an object of knowledge?*', nor the question '*What is man as a free subject in possession of this knowledge?*'

At closer inspection, all other questions and examinations converge in, spill over into, and culminate in a more pragmatic practical examination that Kant takes great pains to complete at the end of his teaching career in his *Anthropology in pragmatischer Hinsicht*. Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view, and with a pragmatic point of view in view, focuses on what the human being "*as a free-acting being makes of himself or can and should make of himself*[32]" (Kant, 1798/1978, p. 399).

Conceived as a - crucial and critical - crib and topic for the critical faculty, human existence ultimately begins to make itself felt everywhere with the critical turn and the distribution of critique. What ultimately originates with pragmatic anthropology is neither man as a positively given entity, nor man as a free acting moral agent, neither man as an empirical being nor man as a rational creature. The starting point and subject for pragmatic anthropology is instead knowledge concerning an experience of various respects of the human, which prompts the pragmatic and practical questions: What is the human already

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[32] "Was er (der Mensch, S.R.), als freihandelndes Wesen, aus sich selber macht, oder machen kann und soll"

in the process of making of itself? What can and should it make of itself in continuation hereof?

In the wake of the dissemination of critique and the appearance of the anthropological question, the human being can thus begin to be conceived as a limited, open-ended experi-ence and question. With anthropology, Kant's tripartite critique terminates in the experi-experience and question of a human inhabitant of the world[33]. This being is part of the world, not only insofar as he or she is not only situated in a certain time and space and dwells in a certain part of the world, but also insofar as she or he is endowed with various predispositions for relating to the world (Kant, 1798/1978). Even though these propensi-ties are never fully present in themselves and in this sense belong to the realm of the unobservable, they can be actualized through critical examination, which is then affirmed and further developed.

With the general critical turn in Kant, critique and the human enter into a close mutual relationship, in which they continually invoke each other. On the one hand, human experi-ence calls for critical-affirmative discernment, judgment and reflection to guide and further develop it, rather than theoretical knowledge. Experiencing what they are in the process of making of themselves, the human inhabitants of this world become predisposed to ask for a critical practice that is able to heed, guard, and redirect their pragmatic prac-tice and assist them in examining and developing what they can make of themselves in extension of what they have already made of themselves. Insofar as they have, in this sense, already attempted to rise and set out on a journey without reaching the final destina-tion, these cosmopolites stand in need of further enlightenment as to assume co-authorship of and attain maturity on this journey both at an individual and collective level.

On the other hand, if it is to remain substantial and not a formal, vain and empty specula-tive exercise, critique must be articulated and learned in an attempt to clarify and further develop human experience as an experience of already existing human dispositions. Ac-cording to Kant, thought leaves the '*scholastic conception*[34]' of philosophy (as a 'system of philosophical cognitions and cognitions of reasons' in the service of human knowledge and reason as an end in itself behind) (Kant, 1800/1978, p. 446) to the extent that it be-comes knowledge concerning, entering into, and serving the larger context of human purposiveness and design. As it affirms, re-shapes, and sets new guidelines for the human mode of living, critical thought becomes philosophy in the true sense of the word (Kant, 1800/1978, p. 447). This is a '*philosophizing*' that brings a love of wisdom to expression over and above a love of knowledge; and, to be sure, philosophy in this worldly sense cannot be learned "*for the simple reason*" "*that it has not yet been done and presented*[35]" (Kant, 1800/1978, p. 448). Instead, philosophizing must be acquired "*through exercise*[36] *and one's own use of reason*[37]" (Kant, 1800/1978, p. 448). Kant certainly published his *Anthropology* as a culmination of his authorship, but he dedicated twenty-three years of his entire teaching career to doing anthropology, since "[*f*]*or Kant this was the best and most efficient way to teach students critical thinking*" (Wilson, 2006, p. 2).

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[33] "Weltbewohner"
[34] "Schulbegriff"
[35] "Nocht nicht gegeben"
[36] "Übung"
[37] "Selbsteigenen Gebrauch der Vernunft"

The Critical State of Critique

In the age of criticism, critique becomes an inescapable, ubiquitous, inherent part of practice, to which every human activity must be subjected, not only to avoid just suspicion of its not being able to resist critique, but also to be challenged and thereby rise to a fuller realization of the prospects it seems to hold out.

Within this context, critique is certainly not simply polemical fault-finding; neither is it just a useful activity or a way to eradicate errors, quite the contrary. With this approach, there may be found "*something in critique which resembles virtue*[38]" (Foucault, 1990, p. 36), not just because it can be conceived as an attitude or a habitus. Critique can here certainly be perceived as something akin to virtue, if one by virtue understands a practical, ethical attitude that suspends obedience to authority and general rules to focus on the cultivation of judiciousness and excellence with regard to the conduct of already existing dispositions and the challenges they present (Aristotle, 1994). Critique may even be perceived as the modern virtue par excellence, in an age that claims to be enlightened. Wherever and whenever transformation is conceived as a movement, in which humans are in the process of leaving their state of minority and acquire new dispositions, a critical intervention seems called for. This intervention is able to guide this activity "*in the name of an* (…) *emerging ground of truth and justice*" (Butler, 2003, 10). Conceived in this manner, critique becomes aesthetic, insofar as it involves the suspension of morals in the deontological sense of binding commandments. However, this aesthetic attitude remains ethical, insofar as the critical attitude involves an ongoing normative commitment, rather than a suspension of judgment. The critic does not simply say no to existing demands or suspend commitments to leave the normative behind and thereby set up a non-committed free space. Rather, the critic departs from existing grounds of validity to assess what she or he can make of herself and others at this instant of humanity. This is done to examine what he, she, and we are in the process of committing ourselves to. In this manner, critique may also be seen as a rise to the challenge of giving an account of oneself and becoming a responsible being (Butler, 2005).

With the *incontournability* or inevitability of critique for human practice in the age of criticism, however, there is also a possibility that critique issues an unconditional declaration of independence and thereby becomes an end in itself. In this case, critique may take the form of a ubiquitous, negative, and destructive self-affirming human activity.

Of course, Kant may be charged with the crime of promoting a negative and self-perpetuating notion of critique. One can certainly also argue the case that Kant's critique basically ends up laying the groundwork for an anthropocentric order that installs Man and male reason at the centre of the universe as a relatively unproblematized basic measure and norm (Braidotti, 2013, p. 171-72). This would posit philosophy as the sole legislator, even as his critical attitude aims at bracketing any power issues and discrediting any attempt to establish a counterculture, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Raffnsøe, 2016c, p. 23-25, p. 9-10 ; Raffnsøe, 2013, p. 37, p. 60-61). Such approaches could certainly also have proved instructive. Yet, when opting for these approaches without further ado, one risks falling prey to exactly the same kind of negative self-perpetuating and self-promoting kind of critique that one would like to see confirmed in Kant. Practiced without

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[38] "Qui s'apparente à la vertu"

further differentiation, critical attitudes of this kind often gain distinction, as they construe the target of critique as guided by guile or ill will, and the analyst as an innocent and persecuted victim surrounded by conspiracies (Sedgwick & Frank, 2003). In this article, I have adopted an approach differing from *"the very productive critical habits embodied in what Paul Ricoeur memorably called the "hermeneutics of suspicion" – widespread critical habits indeed, perhaps by now nearly synonymous with criticism itself"* (Sedgwick & Frank, 2003, p. 124). In the place of such critical habits, I have tried to practice a different critical stance, trusting the field investigated to contain something still of value and focusing on its ability to ameliorate and provide inspirational pleasure within the present context (Sedgwick & Frank, 2003). Consequently, I have tried to read Kant and the ensuing major critical traditions to discern, characterize, and intensify crucial traits that set and continue to set the agenda in ways that may prove astonishing and inspiring, and in this capacity serve to make amends for a certain bias that characterizes present conceptions and practices of critique.

For all the reasons given, it is misleading to consider criticism as an immediately useful activity that contributes universally to and improves its surroundings. Cavell has forcefully demonstrated how scepticism may re-appear as a forceful and uncanny inclination, even within the normal run of things. Especially if it becomes an imperative end in itself to confront and eliminate this disposition, the inclination may turn into an all-consuming challenge, impossible to do away with (Cavell, 1979; Cavell, 1988). Something similar can be said of its modern counterpart: '*critique*'. Criticism is certainly not an absolute or unambiguous value, a goal that must be pursued on its own conditions, but an activity that must be taken up judiciously, with an eye to and a sense of when to begin and when to stop.

Its force is found in the continuous self-critique, which does not imply that critique must be self-perpetuating, - quite the opposite. While critique may be ever-present, it can never become all-inclusive and all-powerful. Critique can become unavoidable, but is not thereby a position or a mode of existence which is prudent to remain in. To avoid the possibility of becoming its own caricature, critique must appear at its own court and remain critical of itself, but in the sense of self-moderation.

All this became obvious when critique took up its modern, all-encompassing, and self-directed format in Kant. Since then it has been necessary to retain a view to the critical position of critique in the age of criticism, also through self-criticism, at least if critique is to retain its position and not regress to critical dogmatism.

In Danish philosopher Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Post-script,* the fictional author *Climacus* compares himself to a number of his successful contemporaries. By building railways, presenting systematic surveys of existing knowledge, or groundbreaking discoveries, they were all benefactors of the age and had made names for themselves by making life easier and more reasonable, be it at a practical, theoretical, dogmatic, or even spiritual level. He set a different goal for himself: "*You must do something, but inasmuch as with your limited capacities it will be impossible to make anything easier than it has become, you must, with the same humanitarian enthusiasm, as the others, undertake to make something harder!*" (Kierkegaard, 1962b, p. 155). In this manner, Climacus set a particularly challenging human task for himself and others, i.e. to rise to the role of a philosophical '*gadfly*' (Plato & Fowler, 1990, p. 30e) and become an annoying, yet powerless and frail, social critic questioning what everybody else took for granted.

What Kierkegaard in the last analysis took from Socrates' questioning of received practice before the Platonic inward turn was above all its irony (Kierkegaard, 1962a, b). Contrary to received opinions of Socratic irony, the gadfly's irony for Kierkegaard did not primarily reside in Socrates' skill in talking ironically, a rhetorical technique that would permit him to critically distance himself from his interlocutors by saying the opposite of what he meant and thus by his feigned ignorance trick them into unwittingly revealing their own lack of knowledge.

On the contrary, Socratic irony was existential. It rested on an experience of irony that Socrates believed to share with his interlocutors. This was the experience that they were all pretentious beings, or beings that in and through their own practice put themselves forward in such a way that they made claims (Lear, 2011, p. 10). In doing what they were already doing, they were concomitantly always already making claims about what they were up to. When one puts oneself forward as a teacher, a medical practitioner or a philosopher, there is certain pretense in doing so; and the possibility of an inherent irony arises in so far as a gap may open between the pretense (or the aspiration) of one's practice, on the one hand, and one's actual practice, on the other hand.

Irony in this Socratic sense exploits this already existing ironic gap in existence. Instead of turning towards the world in an "*infinite absolute negativity*" and becoming alien to the world (Kierkegaard, 1962a, p. 274), Socratic irony turns toward existing forms of practice to examine what participants in these activities find themselves committing themselves to, maybe even without being fully aware of making this commitment. An investigation of what this pretense expresses instantiates when and how this practice falls short of its aspiration, to such a degree that maybe none of its practitioners may fully live up to its expectations (Lear, 2010, p. 22-25).

In this manner, Socratic irony turns towards practice '*from within*' in an affirmative, yet critical, disruptive and challenging way. Understood in this way, irony and critique are not to be seen as ways to withdraw from practice. Instead, they make a firm commitment to and participate actively and fully in practice. As a consequence, the ironists and the critics are not merely annoying and provocative gadflies, but already committed provocateurs or provocatrices acting out of duty who are willing to invest their own life in a battle for the '*would be directedness*' or the virtuality of practice. With a passionate and burning humanitarian enthusiasm, they undertake to make life harder and more challenging, rather than easier and more agreeable.

In his critical philosophy, Kant articulated three different kinds of affirmative critique that may still inspire in the age of criticism. As is evident in the lives of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, however, criticism is an activity that for even the most acute minds may turn into an all-destructive iconoclastic self-affirming end in itself. Critique in any form that it may take is thus an activity that must be taken up judiciously and practiced *with sophrosyne,* with healthy-mindedness and an eye on when to begin and when to finish, but also discretion as to its various forms.

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School Involvement: Refugee Parents' Narrated Contribution to their Children's Education while Resettled in Norway

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Abstract

In the majority of research, resettled immigrant and refugee parents are often considered to be less involved with their children's schooling than majority parents. This study challenges such research positions, based on narrative interviews about parenting in exile conducted with refugee parents resettled in Norway. Cultural psychology and positioning theory have inspired the analyses. The choice of methodology and conceptualisations have brought forth a rich vein of material, which illuminated agency and active positions in the parents' narratives about involvement with their children's education. Involvement narratives of success achieved by parents taking action are presented as well as narratives of thwarted agency. Parents' narrated action includes also involvement outside officialdom, such as informal contact with teachers. It is assumed that the latter involvement forms have become invisible in the majority of earlier research on refugee parents' school involvement due to methodological choices, and may have contributed to deficit positioning of refugee parents as passive in school involvement. This article's agency narratives form a sharp contrast to such deficit positioning.

Introduction

By the time refugee families resettle in exile, their children will often have missed out on years of schooling due to war, flight or periods in temporary exile without the right to education (Alitolppa-niitamo, 2002; Hos, 2014; McBrien, 2005; Thorshaug & Svendsen, 2014). Such children may face considerable educational challenges in host countries. An important consideration is how refugee parents engage in their children's education and how this is reflected in research. Studies of parental engagement have tended to find that refugee parents adopt a more passive role than majority parents in the host country (Alitolppa-niitamo, 2002; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Githembe, Morrison, Bullock, Kinnison, & Jacobson, 2009; Holm, 2011; Matthiesen, 2016; McBrien, 2011). This article is based on a study of parenting in exile in broad, where refugee parents narrate extensive

engagement in their children's education. Their interviews provide rich descriptions of parent involvement. This new evidence will be discussed in the light of existing research, and go on to challenge earlier findings. The article is intended to show:

> How existing research positions the involvement of refugee parents and how this obscures some parental contributions.

> How parent involvement is narrated in my material.

This study leans on a social constructionist theoretical framework. Consequently, "[t]*he terms in which the world is understood*" are seen as "*products of historically situated interchanges among people*" (Gergen, 1985, p. 267). Hence, I consider parent involvement to be a culturally variable phenomenon that may be achieved in various ways (Intxausti, Etxeberria, & Joaristi, 2013; Knudsen, 2010; Whitmarsh, 2011). Epstein (1997; 2010) is often referenced, as are Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997), whenever there is a need to describe or explain school–parent collaboration. Epstein has formulated six types of parent involvement,[1] for which the school should take the initiative. Despite the fact that the public discourse concerning parent involvement is constantly changing (Dahlstedt, 2009; Knudsen, 2010), Epstein's types of involvement form the point of departure for a great deal of international research in this area, irrespective of whether the informants are teachers or parents.

The interviews on which this article is based, explore parenting in exile in general. Parental involvement in schooling was not a specific interview topic. However, while analysing the material it became apparent to me that the parents considered their children's education to be a highly pertinent topic, and as a consequence this was made a subject of specific analysis. In other words, the empirical evidence drove the analysis. The design of this study allows scope for involvement narratives that would easily be disregarded by research that employs pre-defined categories of parent involvement (Epstein, 2010). The study includes interviews with largely the same number of fathers and mothers, and many of the fathers provide rich narratives about parent involvement. Many of the earlier studies that involve ethnic minority parents include very few informant fathers (Holm, 2011; Intxausti et al., 2013; Mapp, 2003; Matthiesen, 2015a, 2015b, 2016).

The current body of research

The majority of research

In general, international research often points to the high ambitions that many refugee parents and other non-Western immigrants harbour for their children's education (Alitolppa-niitamo, 2002; Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; Garcia Coll

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[1]   1. Help families establish home environments to support children as students.
   2. School-to-home and home-to-school communications.
   3. Volunteering. Parent help and support in school.
   4. Family help for students with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
   5. Parent leaders and representatives in school.
   6. Collaborating with community. (Epstein, 2010)

et al., 2002; Leirvik, 2010; Louie, 2004; McBrien, 2005, 2011). Many studies point out that while the level of ambition is high, the level of parental engagement in home-school cooperation is low (Alitolppa-niitamo, 2002; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Githembe et al., 2009; Holm, 2011; McBrien, 2011). Some researchers have sought to explain these findings, suggesting that the educational systems of Western countries have been developed with active parental involvement in mind, and that immigrant parents are rarely able to get involved in the way expected of them by the institutions of their adopted countries (Alitolppa-niitamo, 2002; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; McBrien, 2011). Language barriers are highlighted as an important contributing factor (Alitolppa-niitamo, 2002; Bouakaz, 2009; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Hope, 2011; Nilsson, Barazanji, Heintzelman, Siddiqi, & Shilla, 2012), while some look to cultural differences to explain the lack of parent involvement, for instance by pointing out that home-school collaboration is not the norm in the refugees' countries of origin (McBrien, 2005). Parents interviewed in a number of studies considered it would show a lack of respect for the teachers if they were to voice an opinion about school matters (Bouakaz, 2009; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; McBrien, 2005, 2011; Whitmarsh, 2011). Holm's PhD thesis (2011) about Somalis in Norwegian schools includes interviews with teachers as well as parents. The interview guide is based on Epstein's categories. One of the findings is that fathers are less involved in their children's education than mothers. Few narratives describe the practical nature of the involvement, particularly of fathers, and engagement is rarely mentioned unless easily allocated to one of Epstein's categories. Thorshaug and Svendsen (2014) report on children who have missed out on school before arrival in Norway. Their report refers to the parents' unrealistic expectations of their children's education, but do not suggest the refugee parents as a potential resource to help alleviate their children's situation.

Criticism of the majority of research

A smaller body of qualitative research based on material from the USA (Auerbach, 2007; Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013; Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, & George, 2004; Fine, 1993; Lopez, 2001; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009; Whitmarsh, 2011; Yosso, 2005) criticises the very premise of most research that concludes that parents from non-Western countries are less engaged in their children's education than majority parents. These critics share the view that parental involvement is a socially constructed, culturally variable phenomenon. Consequently, they discover forms of parental involvement which have eluded mainstream research (Auerbach, 2007). Not all the informants in these research projects are refugees. The selection criteria normally include poverty or a working class background, but many informants are immigrants with poor English and limited knowledge of the American school system, a feature they have in common with refugees. Auerbach points out that for 20 years Epstein (1997) has been the sole definer and provider of guiding principles for parental school involvement in the USA, and that the research is often concerned with evaluating Epstein-based programmes. This research normally employs quantitative methodology and/or relies on pre-defined categories of involvement, such as Epstein's six types.[2] Baquedano-López et al. (2013, p. 150) maintain that research on parental involvement is dominated by 'deficit approaches about students and families who are not from the dominant majority' that 'have constructed them as lacking and in need of support'. The critics mentioned above use a

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[2] See footnote 1

qualitative methodology and take a more broadly based approach to parental involvement. The premise on which they base their research has many things in common with the premise on which my own study was based. In the following, I'll borrow Auerbach's (2007) expression 'mainstream' to characterise involvement corresponding with and research based on Epstein's (2010) categories.

Two Swedish research projects recorded the school engagement experience of respectively Arabic speaking (Bouakaz, 2009) and Somali (Olgaç, 2000) parents. Here parents talk of their problems with the Swedish education system, such as the lack of discipline and the symmetrical relationship between teachers and pupils. The parents interviewed by Bouakaz talk of their language problems and point out that lack of information may lead to parental resignation and passivity with respect to home-school collaboration. Matthiesen's (2015a, 2015b, 2016) fieldwork looks at how Somali mothers co-operate with schools in Denmark. The study concludes that the mothers positioned themselves as supportive assistants and responsible parents, but to be considered as good collaborative partners, they had to relinquish any advocacy on behalf of their own children (2015a). She also argued that silence during a parent-teacher meeting must be interpreted as the result of an interaction process rather than as a manifestation of the parents' 'culture' (2015b).

My intention for this article is to go some way towards meeting the need for research that provides rich narratives about the involvement in their children's education of refugee fathers and mothers, ranging from the illiterate to the university educated.

Methodology

This study's social constructionist framework (Gergen, 1985) is manifest through its interview style and analysis, as is further described below. Inspired by cultural psychology (Cole, 1996), parenting is seen as a socially, culturally and historically situated concept. The meaning of parenting is often naturalized in psychological literature (Burman, 2007), and cultural psychology challenges such naturalization. Parenting in exile explored in this study is thus conceptualized as situated. It is seen as performed in the context of the family's current situation, influenced by the family's past and directed towards the children's expected life trajectory.

The informants are mothers (13) and fathers (12) of 16 families who arrived in Norway 6-12 years before the first interview was conducted. Some of the families' children were also interviewed. Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia were chosen as countries of origin because these nationalities were topping Norway's refugee statistics throughout this settlement period. The parents' educational background reflects the educational variety generally found among parents who have sought refuge in Scandinavia and originate from one of these three countries (Behtoui & Olsson, 2014). The full range is represented, from the illiterate to the university educated. Most of the families included in the study had children of school age or older when they arrived in Norway. These will be given particular prominence in this article. Thorshaug and Svendsen (2014) point out that children who arrive in Norway at a late stage in their school career, are in a particularly vulnerable position. Their family history of war, flight and temporary exile will, combined with the family's socio-economic status in their native country, determine the degree to which these children attended school before arrival in Norway. The study demonstrates considerable variation.

The informants live on the Norwegian west coast, in villages and towns whose populations range from 1,500 to 20,000. A relatively small number of refugee families have settled in each of these communities. This context increases the potential for narratives about informal as well as formal relationships between parents and school professionals.

I conducted all the interviews personally. In most families, mother and father were interviewed together, normally in their family home. Some were interviewed separately. Whenever youngsters were interviewed in the company of their parents, this happened on the family's initiative. Most of the parents were interviewed twice. The topic for all interviews was parenting in exile. The first interviews sought to collect narratives (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) about the informants' time as parents in Norway. Each interview was in part conducted as a life mode interview (Gulbrandsen, 2014; Haavind, 1987). Within the framework of the narrative about yesterday's activities, parental practices were identified and the related meaning making explored. Accounts of parent involvement with the children's school arose not as answers to specific questions, but were spontaneously included in many of the narratives from both time intervals. I see the process of meaning making linked to these involvement narratives as a joint action. According to this study's theoretical framework, I see both the interviewer and the parents as participants in the production of meaning occurring during the interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). One can question that the narrated involvement actions might be over reported. However, what are analyzed are not the reported actions, but the parents' narration and positioning of their own contributions.

The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. They have been analysed as texts, and the analysis is inspired by cultural psychology (Cole, 1996) as in Haavind (2000) and Ulvik (2007), and positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009; Søndergaard, 2002). Positioning as 'The discursive production of selves' (Davies & Harré, 1990) has informed the analyses. In analysing the parents' utterances, I have been looking for both what Davies and Harre (1990) call *reflexive* positioning and what they call *interactive* positioning. The reflexive positioning refers to the positioning of oneself. For example, as the talk of two parents, Osman and Fatime, is analysed, they both position themselves as initiators and drivers of collaboration with the school. The interactive positioning refers to the positioning of others, for example when the father Osman positions the teacher as an expert within a limited field. Harré et al (2009, p. 9) emphasizes searching for the 'local moral landscape' of 'rights and duties' inherent in analysed talk. This has informed the third aspect of positioning in the analyses: The positions parents produce for themselves in the narratives – as a place to speak and act from, giving right to certain performance. One example of this is the position the father Hassan gives himself as a friend of the headmaster. In the narratives, it is displayed how the parents position themselves as worthy parents in an interview with a researcher representing the majority. They position themselves in relation to the majority society. In the analyses, I also refer to how refugee parents are positioned through the research literature.

The analysis was organised in categories that emerged from interview sequences about children's education and parental involvement, and were consequently not pre-defined. The involvement stories fall into one of two different types of narrative which my analysis of the complete material has identified, and which I refer to as:

- Involvement narratives of success achieved by taking action

- Involvement narratives of thwarted agency

All names mentioned here are fictitious. For the sake of anonymisation, some of the family details have also been changed.

Results

The parents position their own contributions to their children's education in Norway in a variety of ways. My analysis of the parents' narratives was based on the following questions:

> *How do the parents position themselves and other agents when they talk about home-school collaboration and involvement in their children's education? What practices are represented in the narratives?*

All of the parents interviewed were concerned with their children's education. Most parents talk of various forms of involvement in their schooling. Homework assistance and homework motivation featured prominently among yesterday's activities when reviewed in life mode interviews (Gulbrandsen, 2014). In some families this was the mother's job, others had made it the father's job. One mother positions herself and her husband in this way: 'To us, education is almost sacred'. One father told me that on the wall in their family home there was a picture of a boy from their native country polishing gentlemen's shoes. Whenever he wanted to motivate his children to do their homework, he pointed to the picture on the wall and told them the story of the boy and his non-existent opportunity to go to school. This type of parental motivation by immigrant parents, used to induce greater efforts at school, confirms the findings of earlier research (Leirvik, 2010; Louie, 2004). The diversity identified through analysis of the interviews is here presented mainly through the narratives of four families. These parents provide rich but different descriptions of parental involvement and make use of discourses that emerged through analysis of my other material. All four families had children of school age and over when they arrived in Norway. In two of the families, one of the children joined in during part of our conversation.

Involvement narratives of success achieved by taking action

In these narratives parents position their own initiative and their own efforts as being key to their children's education. All of these stories describe major challenges throughout the process from the very start, but the parents explain what action they took, and are still taking, in order to address these challenges, and how their efforts were successful. In different ways, these narratives challenge mainstream research in the field.

The building of informal networks: getting involved outside officialdom

Some parents collaborate with the school through informal network mechanisms. We may well ask whether this engagement would be noticeable in studies whose point of departure is Epstein (2010) categories for parental involvement. A number of the parents in my study emphasised the importance of their social contact with school staff. One mother talks of having contacted the teachers at the primary school soon after their arrival in

Norway because her children were being bullied at school: "*And we invited them* (the teachers) *for a meal at our house. They came to see us and talked with us, and we provided them with information about our country and about our religion.*" The teachers passed on the information to the relevant school classes and the mother found that the bullying decreased.

The most comprehensive account of informal contact comes from **Mona and Hassan**, who have seven children. They live in one of the smallest communities included in the study. Hassan came to Norway to seek asylum four years before Mona and the children arrived under a family reunification scheme. Mona and Hassan had never attended school before they arrived in Norway, and they are still illiterate. Nevertheless, Hassan is in full time employment, and Mona has a part time job. Their children arrived in Norway when they were between the ages of seven and 18. At the time, none of them could read or write, and they spoke no English. One of the family's older daughters took part in the interview.

In the sequence below, Hassan starts by talking about his own Norwegian language course:

> I started the course in January. And I received a great deal of help from a friend of mine, Alf, he is the headmaster at the school. (...) He is a good mate, I learnt a lot from him, and then he learnt a lot from me (...) Afterwards I applied for family reunification, the family arrived, the kids started going to School. He (the headmaster) helped me with the Internet, and all sorts of things (…) he helped me for free.

The *relationship* between Hassan and Alf is given prominence as a significant element in the continuation of the story. He talks of this as a mutual relationship: 'I learnt a lot from him, and then he learnt a lot from me'. His position as a friend of the headmaster gives Hassan space to manoeuvre, and he makes use of this space in a number of ways. The narrative makes no distinction between Alf the headmaster and Alf the friend. Later on in the interview it becomes apparent that Alf's Internet assistance was provided in the family home, and that the children were given help to use the Internet as an educational tool. The practical details of how they started school are explained in the following dialogue, to which Hassan's daughter contributes:

> Hassan: No, they couldn't write, nor read. They started reading here. Alf is really good, he's a fantastic guy, really excellent, he helped the kids. (...)
> Daughter: At first (...) we arrived in the summer, you see. (…) And then after school started we were in a small class, and we had Anne as our guidance teacher.
> Hassan: She is really good. (...) She taught me language, Norwegian language, at first. (...) We didn't have a dedicated teacher, only the people who work at the school, the teachers, every now and again. Alf gave them lessons every once in a while, they helped us. And then, he is really good, so the best ones, those who had experience from the school (....) She is really good, she excellent, she taught me (...) grammar, and talking. How to talk to people outside. And then, she is very happy, not angry (...) she taught me again and again and again (...)
> Researcher (to Hassan): But did you discuss with the teachers how it might be smart to go about doing this?
> Hassan: Yes, me and my mate, he headmaster, we, I had good contact with him.

Hassan also introduces a new position (Harré et al., 2009) which entitles him to voice his opinion: He used to be taught by Anne and has his own experience of her teaching methods. He manages to explain that she, selected from among the very best, was appointed to teach the induction class. When Hassan is asked about the planning of this induction programme for the children, he points out that this was the headmaster's responsibility, and makes a special mention of his private relationship with the headmaster: *me and my mate.* Hassan positions himself and the headmaster as partner agents working together to ensure that the children, who have never attended school, would have a good start to their years of education in Norway. Both Hassan and his daughter consider the teaching programme to have been successful. At the time of the interview, Hassan's eldest daughter had just embarked on a university degree course. She gained university admission six years after arriving in Norway as an illiterate 18-year-old.

Hassan's narrative in relation to earlier research

The immigrant parents in the study conducted by Intxausti et al. (2013) also seek a personal relationship with the children's teachers. Intxausti et al., Sainsbury and Renzaho (2011) and Mapp (2003) all ask that teachers show greater willingness to accept informal parental contact. As mentioned, Barton et al. (2004) show in their study from the USA how low-income parents in urban areas create their own space for engaging with and influencing their children's public schools. The authors show how the parents create this informal and personal space in which they also take up a position:

> "Actions that engage are both about how parents *activate* the resources available to them in a given space in order to *author* a place of their own in schools and about how they use or *express* that place to *position* themselves differently so that they can influence life in schools" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 8).

Hassan activates the resources available to him in a way which echoes the examples referred to by Barton et al. (2004). He optimises his personal relationships by positioning himself as 'a friend of the headmaster' and 'Anne's language student'. This optimisation of the positions to which Hassan's relationships entitle him, enables him to see himself as an important agent. He has a limited grasp of the Norwegian language, can neither read nor write, and has no bureaucratic competence with respect to the Norwegian school system. He therefore belongs to the group of people who in the mainstream research literature is positioned among the most passive and uninvolved in their children's education (Holm, 2011; Lewig, Arney, & Salveron, 2010; McBrien, 2005). Hassan never refers to a single formal meeting. It is far from certain that he would get a high parent involvement score as defined by Epstein (2010). A research study design based on these categories might not even have recognised his engagement. In the same way, Barton et al. (2004) point out that the things that their informant parents talk of, would scarcely "(…) *fit neatly into the requisite list of things good parents do, but their intentions to author a new way of fitting into school life calls traditional notions of engagement into question*" (Barton et al., 2004, p. 8).

Mainstream involvement by active initiators

A number of the parents, I interviewed, position themselves as a key resource for dealing with the special needs of children who arrive in their country of refuge with an educational deficit. **Osman** and **Fatime** are the parents of two different families, and both talk of

practices that would easily fit into Epstein (2010) mainstream involvement categories. They position themselves as initiators to and drivers of collaboration with the school, and with a rich practice of parent involvement. Such examples of parents exercising agency challenges previous studies which depict refugee parents as passive.

Three of **Osman**'s children were born in his native country. He arrived in Norway four years ahead of his wife and his children. They live in a small town. Osman was able to complete his upper secondary education in his native country, but war stopped him from going on to higher education. In Norway he managed to get himself a full-time job at an early stage, which he still maintains. When his three daughters arrived in Norway, Huda was six years old, Khadra eight and Faiza nine, and before they arrived only Faiza had sporadically been able to attend school. Osman had acquired some knowledge of Norwegian society and language before the children arrived.

Osman talks repeatedly of educational challenges, and about taking the same course of action on every occasion: "*Then I talked to the school*". In liaison with the school, they found a solution: "*I talked to the school because they [the daughters] needed more help with the language. Then they got it and things improved. They were given another two hours at school*". In this narrative Osman is the one who takes initiative vis-à-vis the school. He identifies a need, and he takes action. This is the process he sets in motion: "*I talked to the school... They got it... Things improved*". Osman authors his agent position as the father of school children through his narrative of *negotiation.* Narratives about parents who view interfering with the teacher's work as disrespect (Lewig et al., 2010) or which reflect the view that meetings at the school mean trouble (Garcia Coll et al., 2002; McBrien, 2005; Whitmarsh, 2011), are often mentioned in research literature that deals with non-Western immigrants. They are however absent from Osman's story. His initiative is also in stark contrast to Holm's (2011) findings, that teachers generally find it difficult to engage with fathers. Osman positions himself as the initiator, and he provides rich examples of how this happens.

Osman also points to other aspects of his own effort:

> "Faiza was a quick learner. But Khadra needed more help. (…) Things were a bit difficult for her. So I tried talking to the school and tried to support her. Tried to teach her multiplication, teach her division. (…) Until she got to 4th year. (…) and then after 5th and 6th year, then it was a bit like that again. So I talked to the school, and again they helped. They said that sometimes some pupils lose ground, and then they need help."

According to his own account, Osman is a father who not only makes demands on the school. His narrative introduces *homework assistance* as another aspect of his own agent position. The homework assistance he provides is described as being extensive enough to warrant calling it home teaching, because the children need to catch up after having missed out on school. When he later asks the school for more help, he conveys the teacher's comment: "*They have said that sometimes some pupils lose ground, and then they need help*". Here Osman refers to a *dialogue practice.* Talking to the school also involves *listening.* Here and elsewhere in the interview he taps into the teacher's expertise. He listens to the teacher's experience, which informs his efforts to understand his own child. This statement positions the teacher as the expert within a limited field. Osman nevertheless takes up the position of having comprehensive knowledge of his own

children's learning process. Osman intensified his level of assistance, as recommended by the teacher. How to go about doing so, he found out by himself:

> Osman: So I had to give her more help at home. No one told me to, but I had to ask every day what they had learnt, what more they needed. What they were meant to learn. I had to explain. I had to buy more books. For there was now a second language (*English*), they need that. (…) They *(the other children)* have studied for four years at the school. So they (*my children*) didn't start at the same level. So they had to put in more work and had to borrow books from the library so they could read more until they had caught up with the others.
> Researcher: So at the time you had to help them with their homework every day?
> Osman: Every day. Until this day I help them. (…) For I have discovered that unless you are with your children, sitting down, they will spend longer on doing their homework, and sometimes they will cheat and not finish their work. Especially Huda. I received two notes from the school, so now I accompany her. (…) But I say: "*You mustn't cheat. You have to finish. Unless you finish, you will not be allowed to go to football*".

According to Osman, the homework assistance element of his agent position is authored by himself. He has personally come up with the ideas for what needs to be done, and his actions are informed by the experience he has accumulated. His homework assistance is described as a creative and experience-based practice, which requires perseverance. At the time of the interview he was still providing it. When he finds that his youngest daughter is trying to dodge her homework, he introduces the fifth element of his agent position as the father of a school child: *boundary setting practices*. First homework, then football. And if the homework is not done, she will have to quit football.

All of the elements in Osman's involvement practice fit in with the current parent involvement discourse (Epstein, 2010), also in accordance to Knudsen's (2010) analysis. Yet his narrative points to two differences between his family and ethnic Norwegian families: his three children have to learn all subjects in a language which is still new to them and even he as a helper is only a novice learner. Furthermore, the two older children have missed out on the first years of school and have to learn an awful lot more in the course of a school year than their classmates. In addition to his extensive homework assistance, Osman tries to compensate by buying and borrowing books that are suitable for the children's real level of competency. Compared to ethnic Norwegian parents, Osman has to provide more homework assistance as well as take more actions.

Fatime is a specialist teacher who used to practice her profession in her native country. Her son Daban is her eldest. He was eight when they arrived in Norway as quota refugees and were resettled in a small town. She tells me that Daban was put in an induction class in the town centre. One day Fatime asked to be present during the induction class. She did not like the situation she observed:

> Fatime: It was a large classroom with six assistants allocated to the same number of languages. And none of them were – I realise now, because I know them – none of them were trained (…) There were two Norwegian guidance teachers and children of six different nationalities and different ages, and it was chaos (...) I discussed this in English with one of the guidance teachers afterwards. I said I was surprised to find a class like this in Norway considering the country's fantastic school system. But she said: "*You haven't any choice, this is mandatory*". But I said: "*You need to listen to what I and the others are*

> *saying. This is wrong!" "But no, you're not allowed (to withdraw Daban)".* (*It was*) just like the regime in my native country.

After a few months Daban was allowed to spend two days a week at his local school with the other 3rd year pupils. Her impression of this class was entirely different. On his first day with the class they went for a walk, and Fatime was waiting as they arrived back:

> When they returned from the walk, the teacher was holding Daban by the hand, and with her other hand she held another boy from our native country. Two refugee children. She held the hands of only these two, and walked in front of all the other children. (…) I liked this situation very much. And I told the teacher that this school system is entirely different to the approach used in my native country. This is the first time I have seen children walking with their teacher. And the teacher caring for the two of them.

Fatime went to the headmaster and asked if Daban could join the 3rd years all week. The headmaster argued against this, saying that Daban would first have to learn more Norwegian. Fatime argued that she, who was from a linguistic minority in her native country, started school without knowing the language of the teaching medium: "*No, Daban is a child. He won't need long* (…), *after 2-3 months things were OK for us* (*when she was a child*)". Then he said that: "*We'll deal with this*". And then Daban started 3rd year.

Fatime takes up the position as an expert. This allows her to assess the other people's competence, and she finds it is not good enough in the induction class. She describes how she takes the initiative to negotiate with the headmaster and how she then makes use of her own formal competence as an educationalist as well as her own experience as an ethnic minority child attending a majority school. Her wishes for her son are accepted.

Osman and Fatime's narratives seen in relation to earlier research

As we have already seen, many of the informants in the studies conducted by Holm (2011), Bouakaz (2009) and Olgac et al. (2000) in Norway and Sweden are dissatisfied with the lack of discipline in the school and with teaching methods they are at a loss to understand. Osman raises no problems of this kind, and Fatime takes the exact opposite stance. With the exception of the induction class, she thinks Norwegian schools are far superior to schools in her own native country. When asked what values from her native country she considers most important to retain, she answers: "*I have noted that the things that are important when you raise a child, are all integrated with what they teach them at school*". She considers her own most important native values as being congruent with the values that her children encounter in the Norwegian school system. In this way she conveys a sense of continuity. At the same time she positions the Norwegian school system as being better at safeguarding these values than the schools in her native country.

Unlike some of Hassan's forms of engagement, which could easily be disregarded by the parent involvement standards described in Norwegian (Holm, 2011) and American (Epstein, 1997, 2010) research, most of Osman's and Fatime's narratives would be recognized within a current mainstream parent involvement discourse (Epstein, 2010). The amazing aspect of the rich agent position that emerges from the analysis of Osman's narrative, is the *contrast* between this and the way that fathers from a refugee background

are normally positioned in the mainstream research – as passive and disinterested parents who are difficult to get hold of.

As mentioned above, Osman explains his efforts by pointing out that an intensive programme is required when children need to catch up while grappling with language challenges. Like many other refugee parents in exile in Western countries (Alitolppa-niitamo, 2002; Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Leirvik, 2010; McBrien, 2005; Thorshaug & Svendsen, 2014), he also harbours a strong desire for his children to go on to higher education:

> They must study. My recommendation to them is a university college, at the very least. I never had the opportunity! My children are here in this country, they have more opportunities than me, so they must study. They must study, and they must work hard.

Osman talks of his own considerable effort to ensure that this may be possible. There appears to be a great degree of congruence between his own idea of the effort required of him, and his educational ambitions on his children's behalf. In this way he is representative of the parents in this study. Thorshaug and Svendsen (2014), who specifically deal with the education of new arrivals with little schooling before they arrived in Norway, fail to mention the parents as a potential resource that might help alleviate the situation. On the contrary, their focus is on the problems created by the parents' unrealistic educational ambitions for their children. The problems appear to be concerned with the parents', often unrealistic, expectations with respect to the level of education that their children might be able to achieve, and at what speed. Proposals for action seek to ensure that "(…) *they are put in a better position to give realistic and good advice to their children with respect to future life choices*". Osman's narrative may provide additional nuance to Thorshaug and Svendsen's description of this problem and their failure to refer to parents as a resource.

Involvement narratives of thwarted agency

Whenever home-school collaboration came up as a topic in the course of my interviews, parents generally voiced a positive attitude.[3] Some of the narratives are, however, dominated by problems. The parents who talk most extensively about problems with home-school collaboration describe how their initiatives to tackle the situation with the school were unsuccessful. I will refer to two narratives by way of example. These were the stories told by Assef and Amina, and by the above-mentioned Fatime in her second interview.

Assef and Amina: Aiming for a foot in both cultures

Assef and Amina have many children, the youngest of whom is 13 years old at the time of the interview. Before they came to Norway they had spent seven years in exile in a neighbouring country. In Norway they were immediately resettled in the small town where they still live. Amina is a trained teacher and Assef is university educated. However, because they both have been struggling to concentrate, they have been unable to learn

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[3] Please note that parents were never asked specifically about this, unless they had broached the subject themselves.

Norwegian. They had enlisted the services of an adult daughter to act as interpreter for our interview. The children's education was a high priority for these parents:

> Assef: It was really important for us when we arrived (*in Norway*) that the children would receive an education. We have always focused on that. Regrettably, there were no opportunities for this when we were living in the neighbouring country, for refugees were not allowed to go to school.

The parents' focus on their children's education is conveyed through a continuity narrative. Education has always been a priority. The seven years spent in their neighbouring country meant that their children's education had been discontinued. Now that they have ended up in Norway, this brings an opportunity for the children to continue learning. The price they need to pay, is having to receive this education in a completely new language, and having to relate to a school that forms part of a very different cultural context. They narrate being prepared for this:

> Assef: We wanted them to learn both the Norwegian language and the culture, but it was also very important to us that they would remember their own background and culture. We wanted them to remember that they are Muslims, that they come from our native country (...), while at the same time learn Norwegian, and have a foot in both cultures. It was really difficult to find the balance. They mustn't become too Norwegian, nor too (*from their native country*).

Some of the cultural price the family have to pay for access to education seems to Assef as being unnecessary obstacles in engaging with education. Assef talks about his daughter's swimming lessons, where different cultural practices clash. Instead of having his wish granted for the school to help his daughter maintain a foot in both cultures, he finds that on this occasion the school will not budge: "*My daughter Meryam, she started primary school here, she had never experienced getting undressed and having showers at school, and wearing a bikini for swimming*". The family has arrived in a country where swimming lessons are mandatory and where swimming is taught in mixed-gender classes to children wearing swimming costumes, bikinis or swimming trunks. In Norway all the girls shower in a communal shower after swimming classes and PE; the boys do the same in a separate communal shower. This clashes with his daughter's sense of modesty, and her religious upbringing to be covered up.

> Assef: When they are young we focus on the need to cover up, and to show respect for yourself and your own body, this is very important for Muslims (…). So that was the first obstacle we encountered, that she refused to join in with the swimming. She wanted clothes that covered her, or she wouldn't join in. And after PE, she didn't want to shower with the others, she preferred coming home to shower.

This is narrated as Meryam's own protest, which concurs with her own account that she provides later on in the interview. A meeting is held at the school about the mode of dress during swimming lessons and the opportunity to shower at home after PE:

> Assef: And when we were at the meeting we asked (...). And we said "*you mustn't expect her to act just like the other pupils. For that's not what she has been taught. And it's not*

that we don't want her to learn (to swim), but that you will have to let her… She needs to respect the lessons, but…".

The demand that his daughter should be allowed to cover up during swimming lessons was not accepted. Meryam, who at the time of the interview was 19 years old, came into the living room during the interview. She gave her own account of her experience at the time:

> Meryam: I joined them for swimming from the very beginning. It felt like the most natural thing to do, for me to be wearing a T-shirt. But after a while I was no longer allowed (*by the school*) to wear it, I had to wear a swimming costume. And that was the end of it. I had only just learnt how to lie on top of the water, as it were. To float on the water. I found it really difficult; I spent a long time getting to that point. So I can't really swim. That was the end of the swimming.

According to Meryam, she was forced by her teachers to swim with fewer clothes on, and therefore stopped attending the swimming lessons. Assef expressed a wish for his children to '*have one foot in both cultures*'. Meryam herself expresses disappointment with the school. Assef feels that it is difficult to find the right balance, to gain having *a foot in both cultures*. They consider the cultural price they are expected to pay for schooling opportunity in Norway as unnecessarily high. Neither father nor daughter feels that the school supported the integration project.

Fatime: The school failed us when we needed it the most

In Fatime's second interview her position with respect to the school was other than in her first interview. This time she talks about her 12-year-old daughter Sara.

> Fatime: Yes, she was bullied for many years at school. Things were really difficult for her for many years, and I tried to find a solution at the school, but I didn't succeed. Because, I'm sorry, but the teacher was unable to co-operate on this matter, to co-operate with me.

This is all about the pupils' interpersonal practice. The pupils do not come up to scratch.

> Fatime: It makes me sad and very angry. I said (*to Sara*) that I feel terribly guilty. For I came here to Europe in the hope that my children would have a good life. Growth, education, health services and living in safety. But unfortunately, Sara gets ill here.

After many years of resistance fighting in her native country and seven years in a neighbouring country, Europe was the solution for this family if their children were to have a future. While Fatime in her first interview explains how the Europe project has succeeded, this second narrative is about the things that have not been a success. Her conscience troubles her for having dragged her children here, but she also blames the teacher:

> Fatime: But it is Sara's teacher who is responsible, I believe. (…)
> Researcher: What do you think this teacher did wrong?
> Fatime: I think that she, she never took account of what I was saying. I've been complaining a lot. Every time we talked I told her that Sara has a lot of problems. (…) But

she took no notice. It was not important to her. Perhaps the children in the classroom also bully (*others*), for Sara said that: "*It's not only me. They bully me, but at break-time they bully the kids from Africa as well.*" (…) and she (*the teacher*) is only concerned with the subjects, not with…

Assef and Fatime both engage with their children's education by talking to a teacher when a problem arises. Fatime says that she has raised the topic of Sara's problems in every conversation she has ever had with the teacher, but she has never prevailed. Assef talks about a meeting with the school concerning their different customs in relation to PE and swimming. The parents and the pupil came up with suggestions for resolving the matter but failed to win acceptance. The parents of both families have tried to communicate through the formal home-school collaboration channels in order to solve the problems, but have got nowhere.

Bouakaz (2009) and Olgac et al. (2000) provide examples of studies which highlight the views of parents and give an insight into the reasons why immigrant parents may take up a resigned and disengaged position. In this present study, nobody has expressed resignation to the point that they have stopped communicating with the school. But Assef and Fatime's narratives may well resemble back-stories that explain why parents become as passive and disengaged as the mainstream research suggests. It would be pertinent to see these narratives in the light of the limited positions made available to mothers, as with Matthiesen's (2015a, 2015b) analysis of her material. Assef and Fatime attempted to advocate for their respective children, but success escaped them. Fatime, on the other hand, had previously positioned herself as a critic of Norwegian educational practices on behalf of her son, at which point she won acceptance for her arguments and achieved the change she wanted.

Discussion and conclusion

The choice of methodology and conceptualisations in this study has brought forth a rich vein of material, which made active positions analysable in the narratives of refugee parents who talk about their own involvement with their children's education. In the mainstream research, immigrant and refugee parents are often positioned as less involved with their children's education than majority parents. The material analysed in this study challenges this mainstream research in various ways.

War, flight and temporary exile closer to home have meant that children of school age in most of the families interviewed have been unable to attend school for shorter or longer periods at a time. When the families are resettled, the children's need for parental assistance is therefore greater than in the majority population.

In general, their involvement narratives tell of the success they have achieved by taking action. This study is open-ended and exploratory without any pre-defined categories of data collection, which makes it possible to identify involvement outside of the mainstream research categories. In some narratives, the parents refer to their own role in informal networks that involve teachers and headmasters as being key to their children's success at school. In this way, even uneducated parents are able to assume positions of importance for their children's education. Furthermore, my analysis has also found mainstream involvement by parents who take up the position as active initiators. A wide variety of

agent positions are available to refugee parents illuminated through their narratives of school involvement. These positions allow the parents to identify their children's educational needs and to take the initiative to engage with their education whether in liaison with the teachers or on their own. These agency narratives form a sharp contrast to the deficit positioning of immigrant and refugee parents, which is prevalent in the majority of research on parent involvement.

In Mathiessen's (2015b) study, refugee parents position themselves as *agents* with respect to school-home-collaboration, but analysis has found that there is no room to challenge and criticise the school if parents are to retain their position as *supportive assistants and responsible parents.* The parents in my study position themselves as contact initiators vis-à-vis the school, and as advocates for their own children, to a much greater degree than in Mathiessen's study (2015b). There may be many reasons for this difference, but it is tempting to consider the community context as a relevant factor. Mathiessen's (2015b, p. 4) families live in *"urban setting in a larger town in Denmark",* while the families in this study live in villages and small towns in Norway. Smaller communities and closer contact between parents and teachers may mean that refugee parents will have a larger number of positions available to them when in contact with the school.

However, the parents did not always prevail. Some of the involvement narratives in my material refer to thwarted agency. In these instances, the parents talk of themselves as active users of formal channels in an attempt to improve their children's plight at school, but they were unsuccessful. These narratives of thwarted agency may well describe the types of incident that led to refugee parents being conceptualised as passive and disengaged in much of the research in this field (Lewig et al., 2010; McBrien, 2005, 2011). Other parents have explained their sense of resignation as a result of having tried and failed (Bouakaz, 2009; Olgaç, 2000). Matthiesen's (2015b) analysis refers to this as *the processes of silencing.* The narratives in this study may be seen as prequels to such *processes of silencing.*

There is reason to continue researching refugee and migrant parents' involvement in their children's education by utilising broad exploratory qualitative study designs. This study demonstrates that such designs may invite rich narratives to emerge and uncover a variety of parent positions. A number of studies based on similar designs may help challenge the mainstream research in the field.

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"You Learn How to Write from Doing the Writing, But You Also Learn the Subject and the Ways of Reasoning"

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Abstract

The research question addressed in this paper is: How do the activities of writing mediate knowledge of writing, disciplinary knowledge, and professional knowledge as intertwined sites of learning? To conceptualise the role that writing can take in these complex processes, we apply an analytical framework comprising two core concepts; mediation and learning trajectories. We draw on an empirical study from the context of initial teacher education in Norway. From our analysis, we identify three qualities of writing as important. First, the writing process should include responding to and sharing drafts. Other important qualities include high teacher expectations and continuous reflection. From the perspective adopted here, learning is understood to be distributed and situated. In particular, in situated cultural contexts, collaborative writing can become a significant mediational tool for learning. Initial teacher education seeks to prepare the student teacher for a highly complex professional competency, developing both professionally and in individual subjects. To do so, students must transform social structures and the tools embedded in practices into psychological tools. We contend that writing is one significant tool in moving through complex trajectories of learning towards becoming professional teachers.

Keywords

Mediation, learning trajectories, writing across the curriculum, teacher education, collaboration, professional competency

Introduction

The title of this article is a quote from one of the student informants enrolled in the empirical study described here. The study aimed to explore in depth how the dynamics of

writing activities create mediational tools for developing knowledge of writing, disciplinary knowledge, and professional competence as intertwined sites of learning. To conceptualise these complex processes, we apply an analytical framework comprising two core concepts. The first of these concepts is *mediation* (Wertsch, 1998, 2007). We are interested in how tools for thinking and acting are made available to students through writing in initial teacher education (ITE), with particular regard to what Vygotsky characterised as *psychological tools*: signs, symbols, and words. In this paper, we conceptualise writing as a nexus for exploring such tools (Wittek, 2013). In using the term *writing*, we have in mind the whole process, beyond the production of the text and including such actions as drafting, rewriting, receiving and giving feedback, transforming thinking into written sentences and vice versa. The second core concept is *learning trajectories* (Dreier, 1999, 2008), emphasising the timeline within which competence building and learning occurs, as well as the diversity and multidimensionality of learning processes (Lahn, 2011, p. 53). The actions of exploring, comparing, and contrasting different social experiences provide the dynamic of learning trajectories.

The study addresses the following research question: *how do the activities of writing mediate knowledge of writing, disciplinary knowledge, and professional knowledge as intertwined sites of learning?* To approach this question, we divided our research into three phases: identifying students' perceptions of writing and their experiences of writing as a tool for learning in ITE; identifying and investigating in depth the specific writing activities that students perceived as exemplary instructional practices; and analysing the findings from phases one and two in light of the core concepts above.

The following text is organised as follows. We start by anchoring the study in other relevant research; then, we elaborate on our analytical framework. The next section describes key aspects of the empirical case study and the methodology. In the final sections, we present and discuss the findings of the study and our conclusions.

Background

Our contemporary understanding of all higher education, in which ITE in Norway is situated, is that it is a place for written knowledge production (Kruse, 2006). Writing is generally regarded as an educational tool that enhances learning (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010; Carter, 2007; Dysthe, 2002; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Langer & Applebee, 1987; Wittek, 2013; Wittek, Askeland, & Aamotsbakken, 2015). In recent years, research on the processes of writing has shifted from strictly cognitive accounts of learning to write or revise content to fit genre conventions (e.g., Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1981) to the importance of acquiring knowledge of the genres and conventions of writing within a structured social setting (e.g., Bazerman, 2009; Myhill, 2009; Prior, 2009; Russell, 2010). On this latter approach, writing is understood as a social practice and activity (e.g., Graue, 2006; Wittek et al., 2015). For example, Nystrand (1986) has argued that writing is a social activity that develops from the relationship between writers and readers as well as the writer's developing understanding of the conventions of text genres.

Substantial evidence supports the idea that dialogical pedagogy can be productive for students' learning (e.g., Alexander, 2008; Karsten, 2014; Thompson & Wittek, in press; Wells, 1999). Several studies (e.g., Karsten, 2014; Prior & Shipka, 2003) have explored the relationship between writing and dialogic activity, concluding that exactly this combination has clear potential to enhance learning. Researchers have also offered some

evidence of the importance of the expressive mode of writing (Britton, Burgess, Martin, McLeod, & Rosen, 1975) as a mediational tool for development (e.g., Brand, 1987; Dysthe, 2002; Lerner, 2007; Smagorinsky, 1997). Activities such as producing assignment drafts, giving and receiving feedback, and rewriting existing drafts have significant potential for social learning (Linell, 2009) that transcends those activities themselves (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). However, little research has investigated how writing mediates knowledge about writing, disciplinary knowledge, and professional competence as intertwined sites of learning along a timeline.

As indicated above, research in the field of writing as a tool for learning has gradually shifted from strictly cognitive accounts of learning to a focus on social influences on cognitive activity (Smagorinsky, 1994). According to Lea and Street (1998), current educational research on student writing can be characterised in terms of three main strands. The first of these is the *study skills* approach, which assumes that literacy is a set of atomised skills "which students have to learn and which are treated as a kind of pathology" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159). The second strand is the *academic socialisation* approach, which assumes that students learn what and how to write because university instructors induct students into the academic culture of the discipline or profession. The third model, *academic literacies*, originated in the so-called "new literacy studies" (Barton, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanič, 2000; Hamilton & Pitt, 2009; Lea & Street, 2006). The present study is positioned within that last model, which will be described below.

Within the new literacy approach, several scholars have foregrounded the close relationship between writing and learning (e.g., Barton, 2007; Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Others have asserted that student writing and learning are issues of identity rather than skills or socialisation (Ivanič, 2004; Thompson, 2015). New literacy research has demonstrated the power of writing in improving literacy as well as its impact on identity formation. Macken-Horarik, Devereux, and Trimingham-Jack (2006) investigated the literacies of pre-service teachers and the implications for mapping and developing students' literacy competencies. They concluded that students integrate sometimes-competing meaning potentials through the production of a text in a particular genre. In another article, Burgess and Ivanič (2010) proposed a framework for investigating the discoursal construction of writer identity. They rejected asocial conceptualisations of literacy as a set of autonomous, decontextualised skills located in the individual, instead conceiving of literacy as *social practices* (Brandt, 1990; Ivanič, 2004). Ask (2007) investigated how student teachers perceived their own knowledge of academic writing in the final phase of teacher training. She concluded that responses from teachers and peers were of most importance. Rienecker (2007) echoed these conclusions, finding that the activities of writing and active involvement in response activities were the most important aspects of developing both academic writing and content knowledge. This finding corresponds well with our study, so we will address it again later. Rienecker also found that learning of academic writing and subject content are reciprocal, mutually supporting processes.

Within the new literacy approach, research has focused in particular on writing in literacy education, exploring cognitive processes related to writing as social practices in interesting ways. This article considers writing as a tool for learning and thinking beyond literacy education. Addressing the development of writing skills, disciplinary knowledge, and professional competence as intertwined processes in ITE, we explore how these are linked in students' trajectories of learning. The aim is to add depth and nuance to the existing body

of research by investigating how writing can help student teachers to explore, develop, and organise their thoughts as an ongoing process of relating, comparing, and contrasting social experiences.

Analytical framework

Our analytical framework assumes that the world comes to us in *mediated* form (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998)—that is, people do not act in a direct, unmediated way in the social and physical world but through tools or mediators of various kinds. As Säljö (1999) explained, "There is no such thing as pure cognition that can be assessed per se". A range of historically and culturally developed tools specific to the profession of teaching are mediated to the students through activities of writing. We are social beings, thoroughly dependent on each other, and there will always be a link between individual cognition and social activity within a given context. Writing is in itself a way of using language as a mediational tool and is therefore important for cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). In the activities of writing, a wide range of tools such as theories, concepts, and cultural and professional norms and guidelines come into play. Writing is action at an individual level, bringing together different social and cultural signs, symbols, and words into new senses of "meaning" (Wittek, 2013). Psychological tools are devices for influencing the mind and behaviour of oneself or of others (Daniels, 2015). Tools mediate and *reshape* both the activity and the learning and thinking at a personal level (Vygotsky, 1978; Wittek & Habib, 2014). The process of writing is thus interaction, not only with culturally developed tools (such as instructions on how to write an assignment) but also with others on the periphery, or *third parties* (Linell, 2009), such as the author of a syllabus book or an internship mentor referred to in conversation.

In his analysis of Vygotsky's writings, Wertsch (2007) distinguished between two main categories of mediation. While *explicit* mediation involves "the intentional introduction of signs into an ongoing flow of activity" (Wertsch, 2007, p. 185), *implicit* mediation typically contains signs "in the form of natural language that have evolved in the service of communication, and are then harnessed in other forms of activity" (Wertsch, 2007, p. 185). In the context of ITE, an example of explicit mediation is where student teachers are introduced to concrete theories, didactical models, or instructions for a written assignment. Implicit mediation can include specific ways of reasoning, procedures for finding the right answer, or accepted ways of arguing in an assignment written for a specific discipline (Wertsch, 2007). Typically, these processes are not made explicit but must be unpacked by the students themselves. Implicit mediation becomes possible when students participate in developing and exploring the meaning potentials of the tools they use (e.g., concepts, theories, didactical models, or electronic devices for teaching and learning), often without fully understanding those tools.

The second component of our analytical framework is the concept of *trajectories of learning* (Dreier, 1999). To speak of trajectories rather than developmental processes is to take into account the diversity and multidimensionality of learning, as well as the embeddedness of trajectories in systems that vary along temporal and spatial dimensions. Experiences are interpreted and transformed into psychological tools in creative ways within timelines, and trajectories of learning develop continuously as participants engage in social practices (Wittek et al., 2015). This concept of trajectory focuses on the exploration of different experiences in relation to one another. Learning trajectories imply continuous motion, and the actions of exploring, comparing, and contrasting different ex-

periences in their relation to one another—as students must do when writing assignments—are important in enhancing this motion (Dreier, 1999, 2008).

Empirical context and methodology

The four-year ITE programme under investigation is based at a medium-sized university college in Norway and accredits students to teach in lower secondary school. Years 1–3 include pedagogy (teaching on campus plus internship; 60 credits); Norwegian or mathematics (60 credits); and two other selected subjects (30 credits each). Students in their fourth year can choose either to specialise in an additional subject (60 credits) or to turn that final year into the first year of a master's programme. The core tool for learning and assessment is continuous work throughout the entire programme, including an individual portfolio of written texts in different subjects. The guidelines for the ITE programme emphasise that all written works produced by the students during the programme must be assigned to the individual portfolio established at the outset. According to the guidelines:

> A working portfolio is a digital portfolio that includes all the works of a student during ITE. The portfolio serves as documentation of the student's progression within the subjects taken at the university campus and in internship. (…) The working portfolio needs to be submitted within the actual deadlines, and compulsory supervision on the assignments has to be completed for a student to be allowed to sit an exam. (Guidelines, 2012, p. 6)

The case study formed part of a large Nordic research project entitled *The Struggle for the Text*, financed by the Swedish Research Council. Our case study employed a longitudinal, ethnographically inspired research design (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000) drawing on several data sources, including selected student assignments and interviews with both students and teachers about their experiences of writing in ITE. In the present paper, we concentrate on the interview findings, with a brief description of our methodology to place the interviews in context.

Each of the 18 students in the sample was interviewed on two occasions. Each participant agreed (a) to attend focus group interviews in autumn 2012 and spring 2013 (2–5 students per group) and (b) to send copies of written assignments from Years 3 and 4 of their studies. Altogether, we conducted 12 interviews with students from different subject areas during the two-year period of the study.

In the final semester (spring 2014), we conducted follow-up interviews with three students. We chose these students because their perspectives on writing as a tool for learning reflected the dominant views of participants. Additionally, we knew from previous interviews that these students were able and willing to share interesting descriptions and reflections on their experiences. Concentrating on only three students in this phase allowed us to get more information about their personal learning trajectories than we could obtain through focus group interviews. All interviews were semi-structured around themes that included self-reflection on writing in different subjects during ITE. We used interview guides in the manner of a typical focus group interview, where the research defines the topics (Morgan, 1996). We aimed to ensure that we covered the main themes in all interviews even though individual questions were slightly adjusted based on how the communication in the different groups developed. We used everyday language to make students feel comfortable and free to talk about their writing and learning experiences. We

also sought to elicit ideas about future practices and learning trajectories in becoming professional teachers. The questions were essentially the same as in the first and the second interviews, focusing on the themes *past and current experiences with writing*, *possible connections between writing and learning*, and *forward perspective* (see Appendix 1 for the complete interview guide).

Table 1: Overview of interviews with students

Group	No. of students	Interview schedule
Group 1	5	September 2012 May 2013
Group 2	3	September 2012 May 2013
Group 3	5	September 2012 May 2013
Group 4	5	September 2012 May 2013
Group 5	3	May 2014

At the same time intervals, we also interviewed course teachers, beginning with four individual interviews with those responsible for courses running in 2012 (pedagogy, social science, natural science, and religion). After obtaining initial information from these four teachers, we used student recommendations to identify two other teachers for interviews. They were teachers of first-year subjects: pedagogy (Otto) and mathematics (Hege) because students regularly mentioned them as being especially influential in encouraging learning. The students' regard motivated us to record their personal reflections about their teaching approach, in which writing was central. We first interviewed them individually (in spring 2013) and then together in spring 2014, as both claimed to have learned from the other's teaching approach. In all the interviews with teachers, we concentrated on the following themes: *own relationship with writing*, *conception of discipline-oriented writing*, *appropriate ways of using writing in ITE*, and *possible connections between writing and learning* (see Appendix 2 for the complete interview guide).

Table 2: Overview of interviews with teachers

Lecturer's name	Course	Interview schedule
Tor	Social science	September 2012
Hanne	Pedagogy	September 2012
Fred	Natural science	September 2012
Tom	Religion	September 2012
Otto	Pedagogy	May 2013 May 2014
Hege	Mathematics	May 2013

	May 2014

All interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. They were transcribed verbatim and analysed by all three researchers, first individually and then in collaboration. Quoted excerpts were jointly translated by the authors. In the first part of the analysis, we focused on

1. categorising what the students described as their most important experiences of writing as a tool for learning; and
2. identifying concrete examples of exemplary writing practices highlighted by students.

The study design, interviews, and interpretation and analysis of the data sought to exploit the benefits of an "insider/outsider" perspective (Jacobs, 2005; Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014). We applied an abductive mode of analysis, inspired by what Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) described as "reflexive interpretation" (p. 247), which is characterised by iterative and critical reading of data interpretations. In so doing, we benefited from the "insider" researcher's context knowledge and familiarity with the ITE institution and practices while also adopting a critical stance based on the distanced views of the two "outsider" researchers.

We are mindful that the research design has clear limitations because of its narrow scope. However, this in-depth focus yielded deep insights into what mattered in students' learning trajectories (and why it mattered). The findings must be seen in the context of a cumulative contribution to the existing body of research (Neuman & Guggenheim, 2011), enabling subsequent research to systematically address the conditions in which writing can work as a mediational tool for learning within certain circumstances, and the conditions in which learning is diminished or strengthened.

Results

To begin, we elaborate on the two exemplary writing practices identified by students in phase A. When asked to provide concrete examples of writing practices that mattered most in their processes of learning, students repeatedly mentioned the courses taught by Hege and Otto. Having identified a focus and potentially rich material, it was natural to dig deeper into the characteristics of how exactly these two teachers encouraged learning through writing. It is interesting to note that some of the basic assumptions shared by Otto and Hege correspond well with the body of research on writing for learning outlined earlier. For example, both emphasised the importance of feedback from both teachers and peers in becoming a skilled writer. Further on, they highlighted the use of writing as a tool for reflection and learning, as has been well-documented in recent research (e.g. Ask, 2007; Rienecker, 2007). While both engaged heavily in teaching and supervising and facilitated peer response, they differed in their teaching strategies, feedback patterns, and personal styles.

According to a majority of the students, the following are crucial aspects of writing as a tool for learning:

1. response activities and a culture of sharing;
2. high expectations; and
3. continuous reflection.

In the following sections, we describe the practices of Otto and Hege under each of these themes and go on to explicate why these practices made a difference, based on students' accounts and the teachers' own rationales.

Response activities and a culture of sharing

Our student informants made it clear that the most important enhancers of learning processes were *response activities* and *collaboration forms that encouraged a culture of sharing*. While the two responsible teachers organised response activities and plenary discussions in quite different ways, they shared some basic principles for running their courses. For example, it was compulsory in both courses to participate in a core group of five to eight students. Within these groups, students were expected to collaborate intensively, for instance by responding to each other's assignment drafts.

The following extracts are representative of student interviews. It should be noted that they referred to themselves retrospectively, as they were describing experiences from the two years previously.

> Student 5: It is our strength that we have developed a culture of sharing. Not many students have this.
> Interviewer: How did you get this?
> Student 1: Otto.
> Several students (simultaneously): Yes, I agree. That's right, mmm…
> Interviewer: What did Otto do?
> Student 1: Electronic portfolios.
> Student 2: He forced us to submit our assignments on an electronic webpage, so that we could read one another's assignments…
> Student 5: …yes, and we were supposed to refer in our texts to at least two other assignments written by peers. And maybe show that we have come to the same conclusions; then you just *have to* read the assignments of your peers.
> Student 1: This was highlighted from the first day—that we shall be part of a culture of sharing, and that we ourselves learn more from being part of a culture of sharing. We learn from each other.
> All students nod their heads and say: Mm, yea, that's right.
> Interviewer: But do you feel comfortable about *being forced* to do this?
> All students simultaneously: Yes!
> Interviewer: So this is good? Why?
> Student 2: We learn more …
> Student 3: … We respond to one another …
> Student 2: … and you become more conscious of your own knowledge then …
> Student 1: …you learn a lot from reading the texts that your peers have written …
> Student 2: ... and you see that, if you only read your own assignments, you turn a blind eye to your own text after a while. (Group 1)

In the sequence above, the students appeared very engaged and often talked simultaneously, as if they felt it was important that we understood the exact significance of what they were trying to explain. They expressed that the culture of sharing they experienced played a significant role in making movement in their learning trajectories. The portfolio structure was an important mediational tool in this regard. It needs to be noted that Otto had a leading role in designing the portfolio structure. From our analysis, we identified that the

students adopted the portfolio as a tool for learning during the course taught by Otto, as elaborated in more detail below. In the interviews, the students clearly underlined that they had no choice during that particular course. Otto "forced" them to work hard, and the portfolio structure formed the basis for this work. However, an interesting observation is that the students continued to work on their texts in this manner later in the programme, even though the teachers did not pay much attention to the portfolio structure. The next extract is from a single voice within a group interview. The other participants nodded their heads as Student 2 said:

> The pedagogy teacher forced us to work very hard. We had to share and respond to very early drafts of our assignments in an electronic portfolio. This portfolio was open to anyone, and we submitted our assignment drafts from our earliest days as student teachers. This was scary at the beginning. (Group 2)

While Hege (mathematics) typically read and responded carefully to students' texts, Otto (pedagogy) left response activities up to the student groups. Student comments on the differences in the two practices emphasised the learning potential of both practices:

> In pedagogy, it was the students who began to respond to one another, but in mathematics, the teacher started. In mathematics, Hege set an example by going first. We listened to her and got an idea about how it should be done. (Group 1)

Otto explained that he engaged closely in the processes of writing during the first weeks but that, after a while, "*the students developed their own drivers*". He went on to explain that a culture of sharing developed and took on a life of its own without constant involvement on the part of the teacher. However, in cases where students did not engage in response groups or left the job to other students, Otto took action. He required these students to submit extensive individual assignments in addition to those already given. According to Otto, this kind of "punishment" worked, as these students subsequently did what was expected of them, and rumours about "*what happens if you don't*" spread quickly. Otto was convinced that future teachers must develop skills in collaboration with others in different roles, which is why he invested so much effort in creating a culture of sharing:

> It is completely conscious on my part ... to set expectations; here we work together, and this is important. It is my commitment [to set expectations], but I get some expectations back too of course ... But it is precisely how we have to work—together, continuously.

Otto designed student assignments for four different purposes. First, some assignments specifically required the student to read the syllabus. For example, in one such assignment, students were asked to present different approaches to the concept of identity, based on a certain source in the syllabus. A second type focused on linking theory and practical internship experiences, as in the assignment on "assessment for learning", based on data collected during internship and on relevant literature from the syllabus. A third type of assignment was the internship report without any requirement for theoretical discussion.

Finally, the main purpose of the fourth assignment type was reflection. An assignment might also take the form of a post on Facebook, and some students noted that Facebook is a useful resource for learning in general. They reported that they often posted a question and received quick responses from peers and teachers; "*There is always someone there to respond*" was typical of student statements. Otto explained that the processes of writing must be organised as part of a larger whole; specifically, he stated, "*Writing, sharing, dialogue, discussions, and response must all be part of the process, and the teacher must participate as a facilitator of learning activities*".

Hege gave her students two types of assignments: didactical discussions and problem-solving tasks. In addition, she often introduced small writing activities during her lectures. For example, she might ask her students to write about a specific theme for three minutes at the beginning or end of the class, and she always required students to write a short log of the day's teaching at the end of each lecture. Hege also set high standards for participation and sharing, and students indicated that she always participated as well. Her rationale for this was closely linked to the course's disciplinary aims, as Hege's intention was to help students to understand mathematics. She expressed a belief that she had to adopt this approach in her lectures so that students would gain experience in using these methods themselves, and she designed all her mathematics assignments with this in mind:

> I have always asked what I can do through my teaching to help the students to understand mathematics and how to reason to solve problems. It's more fun to do mathematics when you understand how to reason; they will then know more of mathematics. Quite often, I meet students who express attitudes like "I cannot understand math and will never learn mathematics" or "Mathematics … it's dreadfully boring". So I have really fought throughout my entire career to find the proper methods.

Otto also affirmed that he made a concerted effort to engage students in study and encouraged them to share and collaborate. The students expressed themselves in ways strikingly similar to Otto when talking about writing as a tool for learning and how they planned to use writing as part of their future work as teachers. For some pedagogy assignments, students had to refer to at least three assignments written by their peers. For example, one student explained that "Otto made us read the texts that other students had written, and he made us refer to texts written by peers" (Group 4). Overall, the students made it clear that learning outcomes were good because of student involvement and sharing, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

> A typical feature of pedagogy assignments was the culture of sharing. We had to read each other's assignments, and I felt then that I wrote for a larger audience. It was not like that in Norwegian, and not always [like that] in religion, either. In Norwegian, the focus was on grammar and correct spelling. (Group 2)

Otto did not involve himself directly in the activities of writing, leaving the job to groups of students from the outset. The students acknowledged that they missed Otto's feedback. One stated, "In pedagogy, the only response we had from the teacher was that the reference list looks okay" (Group 1), while another mused, "I can hardly remember any response from the teacher" (Group 2). In contrast, Hege saw her role as far more than just

facilitating a sharing culture. She asserted her belief that it was important that, as an expert, she should engage in response activities. According to the students, she did so in an exemplary way by starting the rounds of feedback in plenary:

> The responses from the teacher in mathematics were just fantastic! They are in a class of their own—both the responses we had as individuals and in the classes. That teacher was amazing. I did not look forward to mathematics, but with this teacher, nothing was difficult. She gave very specific instructions, and it was clear to us what she expected. And her comments were so specific and good—they were of great help in pushing you forward. I believe that all the students in this class agree with me on this; she was fantastic! (Group 4)

As demonstrated above, the distinct writing practices initiated by Otto and Hege certainly had great potential for mediation. Students were forced into committed relationships, to which they had to contribute both by producing draft texts and by responding to drafts written by their peers. In both "cultures of sharing" described above, the teachers led the students into active participation. The writing activities required all students to participate and to listen to one another, comparing and contrasting different interpretations, positioning themselves, and adopting a stance.

Clearly, however, Hege and Otto facilitated collaborative work among their students in different ways. Hege was present in most of the activities, sometimes by being part of a discussion and sometimes by providing written feedback to the individual student. Her expert comments and questions were important elements of this writing practice, which led to a high degree of explicit mediation in these activities. On the other hand, Otto mostly left response activities to the student groups themselves, making them responsible for finding the right answers in the syllabus and for providing adequate feedback. In this context, mediation was more implicit, as students had to unpack accepted ways of acting and thinking by trying out different possibilities, without the presence of an expert voice.

Both of these writing practices showed real potential to enhance students' trajectories of learning. Relations between students were activated through the high demands for collaboration, and the teaching design strongly emphasised varying interpretations and collective exploration of the tools involved in the process of writing. However, it was up to the students as individuals to use and make sense of the collaboration and to transform these mediational tools into psychological tools. At certain points in time, they had to submit their own assignments in finalised form; this activity can be understood as an action—regulating their own writing and taking a stance—with great potential to create movement in learning trajectories (Dreier, 1999), as students explored and discussed the concepts and theories they wrote about in assignment drafts, as well as the professional implications of the academic ideas they were exploring.

High expectations

The participating students also emphasised the motivating effect of teachers' high expectations of students, and that it was important for teachers to remind students of the requirements for final assignments and exams. In this regard, they identified Otto as exemplary:

> Student 4: Otto placed very high expectations on us, and that was good …

Interviewer: Did you work better because of the high demands from the teacher?
Several students: Yes!
Student 2: It was hard then, […], but those of us who made it are still the strongest ones.
Several students: Yes …
Student 1: …Yes, it was worth it. (Group 3)

Otto is usually responsible for the first-year students, which is also the case in our empirical case. During one interview, he clearly stated that students had received too little training in academic writing from upper secondary:

They just have not learned how to write academic texts. So, the first thing I have to do when they come to my class is to provide an extensive introduction to basic academic writing. For example, what does it mean that the sources we refer to are research-based? They just don't know that. But they should have learned it!

According to Otto, a good assignment is characterised first by its application of relevant research, second by operationalising those theories in a way that is relevant for practical work with students in the classroom, and third by referring to discussions of relevant research. Otto also valued students taking a stance of their own, as long as they could show how it was supported by research.

Students reported that Otto organised learning activities in ways that made them work hard throughout the year. Most of the students added that Otto's tough demands made them feel anxious during their first semester. He would announce that not everyone is suited to teaching, and that a part of his job was to see how everyone performed against the criteria for certification as a professional teacher. In both interviews, Otto repeatedly stressed the importance of hard work and putting pressure on students from day one. The following is typical of student responses to Otto's high demands:

Student 1: The high expectations have been a driving force for me during the whole programme – it has been expected that you sit there at the library, working.
Interviewer: Who is expecting that?
Students 1 and 2: The teachers.
Interviewer: The teachers? All of them?
Student 2: It was the first term in pedagogy—Otto. It was like being whipped on the back.
Interviewer: How was that?
Student 2: It was scary to begin with. Unusual … I was used to reading, but it was new to me to have those high expectations—Otto expected us to enact at a top level, always. And he was not satisfied until he saw that we had done our best. It helped me greatly in terms of motivation. And it is still inside me. It is so internalised now that it has become part of me. (Group 5)

Another student stated:

Otto followed us carefully to make sure that we did a good job. That made me a bit anxious. I think a lot of the other students felt the same way. Our class was reduced […] during the first months, and that might be because of the high demands. But it was good…. I needed it … to understand that I had to read. Results do not come out of nothing; you have to work. (Group 1)

It is interesting to note that students confirmed in the last interviews also that they continued to work as they learned from Otto for the rest of the ITE programme, regardless of whether other teachers designed for it. Otto emphasised the importance of process-oriented writing, and the distribution of outlines as part of the writing process, to enhance learning from writing:

> I think portfolio writing is a proper tool for making processes of learning visible … I mean to organise processes of learning in ways that make them share their drafts, like you can do in an electronic portfolio, and make students respond to each other's portfolio assignments.

The concrete instructions and structures offered by the portfolio as a tool for learning is an example of explicit mediation. However, a range of aspects are involved in processes of writing, and not all of these aspects can be explicitly mediated to the students. There will, for example, be particular ways of building up an argument that are highly context sensitive, and other genre norms must be carefully adjusted to the theme or problem at stake. These refer to skills and understandings that take time to develop, and that have to be learned through processes of active explorations (Thompson & Wittek, 2016).

Hege explained that her equally high expectations were strongly linked to what she knew students would have to cope with as trained teachers of mathematics. Hege taught the students exploratory mathematics and noted that, to teach this subject, individuals must understand what they are doing when calculating. She also explained that students found the process of completing their reflection logs difficult:

> It is extremely hard for the teacher to teach exploratory mathematics in the classroom. Many internship mentors work very traditionally with mathematics, demonstrating the curriculum on the blackboard. They show the pupils how to do it, and afterwards, the pupils attempt the exercise in their books, rather than asking questions and exploring together. I teach students to explore first and then to find some rules in collaboration with pupils. That is very demanding for the teacher, and to be able to do it in the classroom, I have to take them through that way of teaching during ITE. They have to work hard to understand what they are doing when performing calculations, and so my students have to write a meta-text at the end of every lecture. They think this is hard, but I know that this is exactly what they have to do—it makes something happen to their understanding.

What strikes us as particularly interesting here is that, when Otto and Hege placed pressure on their students, their reasons for doing so were a complex combination of factors. First, they wanted students to read the disciplinary syllabus carefully and to work on their understanding of it. Second, they wanted their students to work continuously on the links between processes of unpacking theories and ideas from syllabus books and the practical implications for teaching. Third, they held that teachers must apply pedagogical approaches that they consider relevant for use by their students as future teachers. Finally, they aimed to help students to learn how to unpack guidelines and genre norms in order to successfully complete assessed work. At that point in time, students were in their first year of ITE, and it might be difficult for them to unpack such complexity.

As we drew our data from Years 3 and 4, participants were describing their previous experiences of writing retrospectively and in a reflective mode, commenting on differences

between courses and comparing them. To some extent, they even unpacked the differing intentions of individual teachers, although these were rarely explicitly commented upon. Both Otto and Hege envisaged complex classroom situations when designing their teaching. However, the ability of first-year students to grasp the complexity of professional competencies is very limited. Hege's approach, modelling to make explicit how her students can work with exploratory mathematics in the classroom, appeared to be particularly useful to the students. Hege's way of giving instructions can be labelled as explicit based on the rather concrete instructions and supervising she offered her students. She was highly involved, responding to her students' practices in both written and verbal form. But even though both Otto and Hege offered explicitly defined tools for their students to apply when they worked on the themes at stake, there are always aspects of interpretation involved. Thus, implicit and explicit mediation are intertwined in both of the instructional writing practices unpacked in this paper. The following statement is typical of student observations in this regard:

> When you start working on something you have never done before, you become insecure about yourself. But the responses from Hege were so concrete and good that she helped you to take a big step forward with just a very small comment or sentence. (Group 4)

During the early stages of ITE, the most significant demands on students were what they have to cope with *as students*—in particular, what demands that had to meet to pass the various courses and exams. To be successful, they had to deliver a paper that fulfilled the requirements of the portfolio assignments. In the interviews, we asked the respondents, "Do you write as a student or as a professional teacher?" All of the 18 informants promptly responded "as students". In contrast, Otto and Hege highlighted the importance of professionalism and of helping students to transform their knowledge into how to act in the future as teachers in classrooms. In other words, they assumed that their students wrote and talked as future professional teachers, and these tensions may be challenging for students. The complexity of the teachers' intentions was primarily implicitly mediated, and students were themselves expected to unpack the different layers of meaning. However, our analysis suggests that students gradually unpacked these expectations and learned a lot from explorative activities of this kind as long as there was support from peers and teachers. Students had to work hard to understand the subject matter thematised by the assignments, for example, by reading the syllabus carefully.

However, our analysis of the interviews also identified elements of explicit mediation in both teachers' writing practices. In his plenary lectures, Otto highlighted how an academic text should be written. Hege approached it differently—specifically, she provided detailed written comments on draft assignments, which the students said they found extremely useful.

Continuous reflection

The students emphasised the learning outcomes gained from writing assignments that involved reflection on their role and practice as future teachers. According to the students, reflection on the relevance of syllabus theory for practical work in the classroom should always form part of an assignment, as this kind of written reflection is important for learning and in particular for their personal and professional development. As one student

stated, "*By writing the assignments in pedagogy, I developed as a person*" (Group 4). Another student said, "*Assignments in pedagogy are more about me generally as a teacher, the profession of teaching in all its complexity. Assignments in the disciplines are more about the academic stuff ... and, to a certain degree, issues in didactics*" (Group 1).

Otto considered it problematic that the other disciplines focused so little on how to work as a professional teacher—a view that was also expressed by the students. However, the students said that Hege was an exception to this. As a mathematics teacher, Hege encouraged her students to look for connections all the time, not only between theory and practice but also between the mathematics syllabus and the pedagogy syllabus. She stated, "*They have to understand what they are doing themselves, and it is often useful for the students to use elements from pedagogy in their assignments.*" Hege continued:

> The didactical assignments are mostly about reflection and acts of making connections between theory and practice. This is an important activity in helping students towards becoming professional teachers in mathematics. They get to know disciplinary concepts in depth, and they have to read the relevant literature. When it comes to the arithmetic assignments, it makes them better as professionals … because they have to solve problems. They also have to practise presenting problems and their solutions to the other students, and sometimes they create the tasks themselves. The purpose of all of this is to make students more confident. At the same time, they develop ideas and ways of working that they can later use in class as teachers.

One of Hege's most significant activities with her students was facilitating reflections connecting theory and practice. Students began by reading theory in-depth before trying out their theoretical perceptions during internship. Then, they wrote about the theory, their practical experiences, and their reflections on it. Students emphasised that these activities enhanced their learning and inspired their educational practice. We selected the excerpt below from one interview, but it should be noted that all of Hege's students made similar statements.

> Interviewer: So, I understand that you work quite differently from discipline to discipline. What do you get out of the different ways [of working]?
> Student 1: In math, I experienced a larger learning outcome…. It is difficult to explain….
> Student 2: We learned about how to talk with the pupils. About how to teach, how you can ask questions to enhance learning.
> Student 3: You do get specific stuff … didactics.
> Student 2: If you ask the pupil, "What do you think now?" then you can make them explain things instead of just….
> Student 1: … The biggest difference is that the teacher in math talked to us like we should talk to the pupils—when we have them. So we learn more directly from her. In pedagogy and in science, they do not talk to us as we should talk to our pupils. While they talk to us [and not with us], Hege uses didactics with us that we can use in the same way with our pupils. (Group 3)

In these respects, both Otto and Hege facilitated mediation. They explicitly addressed the links between theory and practice in their lectures and in how they designed student assignments. As illustrated above, they did this in different ways, but the student informants clearly stated that they learned a lot from both practices. According to Vygotsky, writing

is the most prominent way of using language in general and scientific concepts in particular (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 149). One of our student informants explained:

> You learn how to write from doing the writing, but you also learn the subject and the ways of reasoning that belong to the discipline. Writing actually makes you good at doing the job, structuring yourself, putting pressure on yourself in respect of things that you're not very good at. (Group 4)

The statement above illustrates one core finding from our study, namely that writing can work as a nexus that links different experiences and different mediational tools in students' trajectories of learning. Students learning from and about writing entails different combinations of actions that include planning, participating in workshops, writing and rewriting, and giving and receiving feedback. Students also encounter different perspectives in dialogue with internship mentors and pupils. The students viewed encounters with different traditions as an advantage rather than as a problem. As one of the students explained, "There are different disciplinary traditions you have to get to know as a teacher. It might sound a little strange for outsiders, but our profession requires that we are able to write in different disciplines" (Group 4).

In writing their assignments, the students had to interpret the signs, concepts, theories, and values introduced by the syllabus and by lecturers, through interaction with other people and tools in programme-related contexts (Linell, 1998). Otto described his reasons for engaging his students in writing as he designed it:

> I find it important to lead my students through processes of writing where they discover for themselves that writing is a way of structuring knowledge. Writing is the most important activity for structuring your own insights and your own thinking. Therefore, I think it is important to start writing from the very beginning. In my class, they receive their first assignment in their first week on campus, and I introduce them early to the distinction between description and analysis. I use this as the basis for a lecture at this early point, in which I underline the importance of applying theory to academic texts as an optical lens. I believe that writing is the most important of all student activities in higher education. Writing involves cognitive processes that enhance learning in fantastic ways.

What, then, can we learn from these students' experiences with writing, and the perceived significance of the two writing practices organised by Otto and Hege? What do these analyses tell us about student teachers' learning? What matters in using writing as a mediational tool, and what is the potential of the instructional writing practices described above to enhance students' learning trajectories and prepare them for future professional work? Some possible answers to these questions are considered below.

Discussion and conclusion

ITE seeks to prepare the student teacher for a highly complex professional competency, developing both professionally and in individual subjects. To do so, students must transform social structures and the tools embedded in programme-related practices into psychological tools (Wittek, 2014). On submitting the larger bachelor thesis in term 6,

most students involved in this study received good results, indicating perhaps that the portfolio practice effectively mediates learning about writing as well as disciplinary and professional learning. The fact that individual lecturers in different disciplines act as stakeholders for different practices of writing seems to encourage students to develop their own perceptions and to make sense of the opposing positions. The students met Otto and Hege at a very early stage in their education and described both of them as highly engaged teachers who take a personal interest in their students. As students are likely to be more impressionable in the first phase of teacher training, the sequencing of disciplines may be part of the explanation. According to Rienecker (2007), the response to a student's first assignment is the most important because it is the one the student remembers. Initial responses have a crucial impact on students' perceptions of their own capacity to become skilled writers. However, as students also take other subjects in the early phases, our analysis suggests a need for further explanation.

Implicit and explicit mediation are intertwined in learning trajectories

Writing in ITE typically includes learning to write both within and across disciplines. We found that the inevitable tensions arising from differences in writing traditions most often are implicitly mediated, and that this form of mediation seems also to nurture students' reflexive competencies in particular. In producing written texts, students have to make visible for themselves and their readers how they understand the subject matter and how they position themselves within the relevant discourse (Wittek, 2013). These exercises intertwine explicit and implicit mediation when they apply conceptual tools and structures for writing and in turn externalise their conceptualisation by for example unpacking accepted ways of arguing in an assignment written for a specific discipline (Wertsch, 2007).

The study reported here demonstrates that writing can be a significant tool in mediating complex trajectories of learning towards becoming professional teachers. This study also demonstrates that mediation in complex learning trajectories benefits from a longer time span; it takes time to unpack the complex potential embedded in the powerful tool for learning that writing represents. The students did not just *talk* about the exemplary practices of Otto and Hege; rather, they also practiced the collaboration experienced from these particular courses in groups throughout the entire four-year programme, even when this collaborative activity was not organised by the other responsible teachers. The students explained that they had experienced the benefit of a sharing culture and kept on meeting regularly to discuss both syllabus texts and their own assignment drafts.

Students *gradually* unpacked how academic texts should be written, and they gradually unpacked both disciplinary and professional knowledge. Important support in these processes came from continuously writing and rewriting drafts, discussing the syllabus, giving and receiving responses, and participating in plenary presentations and discussions. Both explicit and implicit mediation were involved, and the two types of mediation seem to nurture one another in ways that go beyond the current writing practices.

The learning potential of a culture of sharing

It has long been accepted that collaborative practices in education support learning for all students (Daniels, 2015; Edwards, 2010). The present study confirms that the collaborative practice of producing texts requires the construction of constantly changing combinations of people and resources across settings that are often widely distributed in space (Daniels, 2015; Engeström, Kajamaa, Lathinen & Sannino, 2015). The practice of

providing students with feedback is well documented (e.g., Wittek, 2014), and many studies have noted the importance of feedback from teachers for learning (Ask, 2007; Dysthe, Hertzberg, & Hoel, 2010; Hoel, 1997). However, fewer studies have investigated teachers' feedback practices in higher education (Dowden, Pittaway, Yost, & McCarthy, 2013), and we hope that the present research may encourage further investigation. The cultures of sharing reported by students in courses delivered by Otto and Hege appeared to differ, but both teachers were lauded as exemplary. Hege drew more on explicit mediation in her direct teaching of didactical models and instructions as well as in her personal feedback on students' texts. Otto applied a more implicit mediation in his indirect and "distanced" feedback, by requiring peer feedback rather than teacher feedback on assignments. As illustrated, while students appreciated teachers' responses to texts in order to learn how to write, they nevertheless acknowledged that they eventually learned the writing genre well through collaboration and peer feedback over time. Such experiences align well with the perspective that learning is understood to be distributed and situated (Littleton & Mercer, 2013). In particular, in situated cultural contexts, collaborative writing can become a significant mediational tool for learning (Thompson, 2012a, 2012b). Texts are not inert objects, complete in themselves as bearers of abstract meanings; rather, they are "emergent, multiform, negotiated in the process, meaningful in the uptake, accomplishing social acts" (Bazerman & Prior, 2004, p. 1).

Writing practices as linked to established professional and disciplinary cultures

Through active participation, collaboration, and the use of different resources within established professional and disciplinary cultures, students must identify with or resist the cultures that they are introduced to. These kinds of activities are prominent in the two writing practices reported here, and they are thus seen as critical in making writing an efficient mediational tool. Learning paths are formed as students compare and contrast possible interpretations (Linell, 2009). These processes do not unfold regardless of social context; on the contrary, the movement in students' trajectories follows the shape of more stable institutional or disciplinary cultures. The ability to become a teacher is in part about coping with established ways of thinking and acting within the profession of teaching and current disciplines (Newell, 2006). ITE teachers typically choose the tools introduced to students because of their status as core tools within the profession of teaching, often developed within a long tradition. The writing practices in which students engage cannot be separated from the processes they identify with or resist (Burgess & Ivanič, 2010). The participating students in our study confirmed how critical the ability to adopt a stance on the issue in question is to their learning trajectories. For example, in one assignment, Hege made her students explore and write about their own understanding of mathematical procedures. In the same assignment, she wanted them to reflect upon how to help pupils to understand the mathematical way of thinking, beyond the instrumental means of performing a calculation.

From our analysis, it appears to be important that ITE has a structure that cuts through different subjects and that follows the students through the entire programme. Even though the different teachers follow up the portfolio structure differently, it appears to form a core structure for the students that helps them draw lines between different social experiences—and sometimes between competing views on theories or practical implications.

However, while learning processes are always mediated by the available tools, they also include elements of *agency* and thus offer options for individual agency within a social system (Daniels, 2015). Participation is necessary for the creation of meaning at a personal level, but this does not presuppose full understanding. What is needed to begin with is no more than an ability to inhabit the current activity within which reason and concept operate. In both of the writing practices described in this paper, students are forced to discuss their preliminary drafts as newcomers to higher education. They must participate in academic activities where accepted or "typical" ways of thinking and acting are brought into play alongside a range of disciplinary and professional concepts. Otto facilitates this within the structure of electronic portfolios, where he put high demands regarding the use of academic concepts on the one hand and active use and references both to the syllabus and to peers' assignments on the other. Similarly, Hege also places high demands on her students to use mathematical and professional concepts. Student drafts are discussed in plenary, and her being present in plenary discussions is, according to the students, an important context for them to inhabit an activity within which reason and concept operate.

Writing as a structure for nurturing movements in students' learning trajectories

Students' learning trajectories are largely enhanced by structures that nurture significant movements throughout a longer time span (Wittek, 2013). Our analysis shows that writing can form such a structure. The students we interviewed demonstrated how their learning was contingent on a transformation of the mediational tools introduced in ITE through interaction with other people (an interpersonal process) into a cognitive and inward (intrapersonal) process (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57). Thinking and learning are actively mediated and transformed through the use of signs in the explorative investigation of meaning potentials and relations between concepts. In writing an assignment, students must "try out" alternative ways of positioning themselves. Writing has as such worked as a significant tool in moving through complex trajectories of learning towards becoming professional teachers. The particular practices reported here have helped students to draw lines between knowing how to write an academic assignment, disciplinary knowledge and insights into how to apply this knowledge in a practical context.

Concluding remarks

All student informants identified the same qualities of writing activities as important. First, *response and sharing of drafts* should be part of the writing process; this appears to be considered the most important element. Other important qualities include high teacher expectations and continuous reflection (see also Wittek, in press; Solbrekke & Helstad, 2016). It is also essential that students find inspiration and motivation from these high expectations and that they perceive these expectations as manageable. An integrated ITE programme like the one reported here can certainly reveal the potential of writing as a tool for learning. We are wary that our study is restricted to only one cultural ITE context and only two subjects, but we argue that some of the examples of explicit and implicit mediation from writing may count for writing practices in a broader scope.

Moreover, our analysis indicates that the four-year portfolio structure across all subjects can be of importance in students' professional trajectories of learning. However, students must be forced to become active participants from the very beginning of the programme, using alternative ways of thinking and arguing—that is, they must become actors who continuously reflect, compare, contrast, and position themselves. Finally, the study also

shows that the potential for mediation from writing become stronger when learning trajectories allow developing over time.

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Acknowledgement

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Appendix 1: Interview guide for interviews with students

The interview guide informed a typical focus group interview, in which the research defined the topics of interest (Morgan, 1996). The aim of the guide was to ensure that the main themes were covered in all interviews, even when the questions were slightly modified to adapt to how communication developed in the different groups. We used everyday language in all interviews to make students comfortable and to encourage them to talk about their writing and learning experiences. The two rounds of interviews employed more or less the same questions; however, the "past experiences" component was used only in the first round. Questions in **bold** were asked only in the first interview while those in *italics* supplemented the last round of interviews. At the end of this appendix, we have added a question asked during the final interview with only three students.

Background/Introduction

Names, disciplinary background, and group characteristics—how well they know each other, same class, etc.

- **Past experiences with writing**

- **How was the first period as student teachers? (What was easy, and what was difficult?)**

- **How were you introduced to writing assignments in the different disciplines (similarities and differences)?**

- **What do you think about the writing assignments you were given at the beginning of the study?**

- **How did you experience these assignments as compared to previous writing experiences?**

- **From what you have experienced so far, what do you think is a "typical" study/writing assignment?**

- **What have you written?**

- **What kind of feedback (product/process?) have you received (from teachers/peers)?**

Current writing experiences

- How did you feel about changing disciplines? (What was easy, and what was difficult?)

- In what ways have you worked with academic writing this semester?

- What are the requirements for written assignments this semester? (content/form/theory/method/core concepts?)

- Are there different expectations/requirements for written assignments in different disciplines?

- What kind of feedback (product/process?) have you received (from teachers/peer students?) in the discipline you are now working in?

- How has feedback been organised?

- Have you initiated the feedback you have given to peers? (difference between product/process?)

- How do you benefit from the feedback you receive on written assignments?

- As a percentage, how much time do you spend working alone or in collaboration with peers when developing texts?

- How do you make use of the feedback you receive? (Do you change the text? How?)

- Do you encounter any problems with writing when moving between different disciplines?

- What advantages have you identified when writing in different disciplines?

- *Are there any teachers in the teacher education programme who used writing as part of their teaching in a way that became significant for you? What did they do, and in what ways was this significant?*

Writing and learning

- Do you fear academic writing/writing assignments? Why?

- Do you look forward to academic writing/writing assignments? Why?

- Do you write as a student or as a future teacher?

- Does your understanding of a topic change when writing about it? (more confused/(in)secure/relieved?)

- Have you experienced writing as leading to an "AHA" (good learning) experience?

- Is it easier to talk about themes in teacher education after having written about them? Why?

- In which subject is it easiest to write? Why?

- In which subject is it most difficult to write? Why?

- Is it difficult to formulate your thoughts in written text? Why?

- You are part of a professional education programme (teacher education), qualifying for a specific profession. In what ways do you think different disciplines influence how you "form" yourself as a teacher? Why do you think that?

A forward perspective

- What advice would you give to other students starting their first assignment in the teacher education programme? (How to go about it? How to structure and develop texts, etc.?)

- **What do you think about the tasks you will encounter in the future?**

- **What kind of support would you prefer in connection with writing assignments? Why?**

- *Do you think you will draw on the experiences you have gained from writing in*

teacher education in your first job as a teacher? How?

- *Do you believe that your students will learn more through writing? How? Is this related to particular ways of writing?*

- *How do you aim to facilitate feedback on your students' texts in different subjects? Why?*

- *Will you facilitate peer feedback? Why?*

- *Will you provide feedback on students' texts? How and why?*

- *Will you specify different requirements in different subjects? Why?*

Anything else you want to tell us?

Thank you!

In the last interview (with only three students), we asked many of the same questions as listed above and also added these:

- In what ways are you working with writing this semester?

- Are there other requirements for writing this term as compared to earlier in ITE?

Reflections on ITE as a whole

- Based on the entire experience as a student teacher, what is a typical written assignment in ITE?

- What assignment was most difficult? Why?

- From which assignments did you achieve the best outcome? Why?

- What kinds of organising responses/activities have you experienced during ITE, and did these make a difference for you? Why?

A view ahead

- What advice would you give to new students who are about to write their first assignment in ITE?

- What is an exemplary assignment as you see it? Why?

- Do you think that you will apply some of your writing experiences from ITE in your own classes in school? How and why?

- Do you believe that pupils learn from writing? If yes, what matters in how the process of writing is designed?

- How will you use writing as a pedagogical tool in your class? Why?

Appendix 2: Guide for interview with two significant teachers, May 2014 (ped, mathematics)

Background information was gathered in a 2013 interview. The interview ran more like a conversation between the two teachers and the researchers (two external and one internal)

than a strictly designed structure. The interviewers nevertheless ensured that all topics were covered.

The interview started with the presentation of student texts, which the researchers asked the two teachers to read briefly through.

The interviewers then asked the teachers:

What kinds of texts are these? Are they typical for your discipline? What characterises them?

On their own relationship with writing

- How do you relate to writing? Do you like to write? Why or why not?

- Have you written any texts yourself (curriculum books, articles, other relevant discipline-based texts, other kinds of writing)?

- How do you see yourself (as a "writing teacher" or a "discipline teacher")?

Conception of discipline-oriented writing: process and product

- What (purpose) do you think writing may be used for in teacher education?

- What may writing (throughout the period of study) equip one for?

- What do you mean by "writing" in your discipline?

- What do you mean by "writing for learning" (writing as process versus product)?

- How do you as a "discipline teacher" work with writing as a process/product (phases of writing, developing ideas, drafts, responses, evaluation)? Describe how you do this; provide examples.

- Writing for exams: describe your experiences as "discipline teacher" and as examiner. What do the students struggle with (or not)? How may students' struggles originate in the teaching of writing in different disciplines (or not)?

Good writing education

- What characterises good writing education in teacher education?

- What characterises good writing education in your discipline?

- What are teacher educators good at/less good at?

- What are *your* strengths and challenges as a writing teacher in your discipline?

- What is the relationship between your students' assignments and their texts? Consider quality and relevance.

Collaboration about writing in teacher education

- Please tell us how you work (individually, in a team, etc.).

- How do you facilitate students (individually/collaboratively)?

- Why do you choose to work the way you do?