

# Outsourcing Responsibility - Towards a Transformative Politics of Domestic Work

Submitted by

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

*This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.*

*No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.*

*All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees.*

Signed, Ulrike Prattes



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Viewing the world as one in the making raises the issue of individual responsibility for bringing about change. It also shows that while individual empowerment is key, only collective action can effectively generate lasting social transformation of political and economic institutions (Collins 1991, 237).





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## **Abstract**

In this doctoral thesis, I start from the body of feminist scholarship on “outsourcing” domestic and care work in the global North. I maintain that this debate has importantly highlighted the interactions of gender with class, race, and ethnicity. In its almost exclusive focus on differently situated women, however, the debate tends to reproduce the organization and performance of reproductive work as a “women’s issue,” simultaneously shrouding men’s positions therein. Via a small-scale empirical study I conducted with five domestic work outsourcing, opposite-sex couples in Vienna, Austria, I seek to bring to the fore the affective relations and corporeal practices of responsiveness and non-responsiveness between the outsourcing partners, and their positioning vis-à-vis migrant domestic workers. Using a relational concept of responsibility, I argue that responsiveness to human interconnectedness is required for responsible practices to emerge. I critique the notion of the supposedly “self-sufficient” autonomous individual, and draw on feminist care ethics, to highlight the existing relationality and interdependence among the various actors. I position my project against the positivist paradigm and bring empirical and theoretical material into a conversation at eye level. First, I trace the reproduction and maintenance of unjust structures within the field of outsourcing in concrete, everyday, social interaction in order to emphasize their social nature and changeability. I strive for a systemic portrayal of non-responsive practices as shaped by an epistemology of ignorance, rather than accidental “failures,” and thus critique asymmetrical structures, not individual “character flaws.” Second, I want to identify existing potentials for transformation in regards to the structurally vulnerable position of migrant domestic workers. I highlight potentials for transformation towards social justice that are there and should be amplified. These consist of feelings of guilt,

which I here read as affective “spill-over” that cannot be contained within the narrative of autonomous, independent individuals on the one hand; and on the other hand, practices of responsiveness, and the potential for creative embodied, (affective and relational) performances.

## Part I

# Outsourcing Responsibility





# 1

## Introduction

Two important factors are frequently neglected in the contemporary debate about migrant domestic labor, both of which are constitutive of reproductive work in post-industrialised countries of the “global North.”<sup>1</sup> First, a fair amount of reproductive work that is socially important is not dealt with on a societal level because “domestic” work is transferred to the so-called private realm and regarded as the responsibility of individual household members (cf. Folbre 2001). Second, the positions and practices that men perform within the space of these private households regarding the organization of “feminine” connoted work are neglected in the research literature. In *Love and Gold* Arlie Russell Hochschild states:

For indeed it is men who have for the most part stepped aside from caring work, and it is with them that the “care drain” truly begins (2002, 29).

Hochschild’s text is one of the most influential and often-quoted texts on the topic of domestic work in the global economy. The above quote is from its penultimate paragraph

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<sup>1</sup> I am using this contested term for lack of a more suitable word.

and not much discussed, or taken for granted, in the rest of the essay – a fact that is paradigmatic for the academic discussion of domestic labor.

Feminist scholarship on the outsourcing of domestic labor in the past decade has focused primarily on the differences between *women* as employers and employees and on the specific relationships that emerge out of their different societal positions. This approach has increased white, middle-class feminists' awareness of differential privilege along the axes of race, ethnicity, class, and legal status (though this awareness is still insufficient). Through an almost exclusive focus on the different female actors, the positions and practices of bodily present men seem to have disappeared from the debate. I claim that the failure to look more closely into men's roles in these interwoven webs overly simplifies the complex reality, and reproduces the image of reproductive work as a "women's issue." If we do not challenge structurally powerful positions of men in outsourcing households and if we ignore the presence of racialized men as domestic workers, we will not change the larger structures of the organization of reproductive work or ameliorate the situation of those in the structurally most vulnerable position therein: racialized and economically less powerful women.

I assert that some of the severe problems we face in the field of reproductive work are grounded in broader societal issues concerning responsiveness and responsibility. In looking at the private realm, we will find distinctly gendered "responsibilities." When tackling issues of responsiveness and responsibility we can start from a multitude of places. I approach this matter from a perspective shaped by feminist anthropology and critical masculinities studies, and my point of entry is that of masculinity and reproductive work at home in the geographical space of Vienna, Austria. From this place and perspective, I will connect the discussion of "outsourcing" reproductive work to the

individualised nature of contemporary domestic labor and its gendered and racial/ethnic connotations.

I argue that looking at asymmetries of gender, race and class on a global scale is not enough to break the “global care chains” (Hochschild 2002). I believe that we can only substantially change the structural position of female (“undocumented”), migrant domestic workers in the global North if we also interrogate the individual, supposedly “isolated” domestic work-outsourcing households, and look at positions and practices of men in these home-spaces. If we want more than minor shifts in the organization of reproductive work (e.g. those from class to race to citizenship status) I suggest we reconceive responsibility as emerging through responsiveness to our interconnectedness. Hochschild (2002) describes as care chains the phenomenon that relatively affluent women “pass on” reproductive work through hierarchical structures to other women who, in turn, pay yet other (poorer) women to take on “their” domestic and care work. Instead of continuing the passing on in this way, I argue that we need a transformative politics of reproductive work.

## **State of Research**

The organization of reproductive work in contemporary post-industrialised societies in the global North is constituted through asymmetrical power relations and organized along the axes of gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship status, and class.

Within the last decade, some research has been conducted in the field of “new” migrant domestic work. Most of this work has focused on the relationship between female domestic workers and the women who employ them. As Sarti (2008) notes, the phenomenon of migrant domestic work has been in existence since early colonialism. But, in contrast to the colonial past, when domestic workers often migrated with their

masters to “less developed” countries, and colonial settlers employed indigenous peoples as servants or slaves, it is nowadays women from “poor” countries who migrate to economically wealthier ones. These women are often well educated, married and/or have children, and belong to the urban middle class: all of these features are novelties of the current situation in Europe (ibid.). Global economic inequalities are among the major push factors that induce these women to leave their countries of origin in order to provide for the material needs of their children and families. Another reason is the wish to find “something like ‘liberation’” (Ehrenreich/Hochschild 2002, 3), by stepping out of traditional gender arrangements in their families and/or becoming providers for their next of kin.

Ethnicized, hierarchical segmented labor markets emerge as a result of the political stance shared by many European governments, combining restrictive immigration policies with a relaxed attitude towards the enforcement of laws against the employment of undocumented migrants (Sarti 2008, 90). The abundant supply of quite “affordable” (Rechling 2004, 15; Haidinger 2007, 57) domestic labor in the global North makes it possible for lower class employers to outsource this work (cf. Sarti 2008; Haidinger 2008). Migrant domestic workers often experience a “contradictory class mobility” (Parreñas 2001); leaving qualified but badly paid jobs for work in the domestic service sector, they still earn higher wages than in their countries of origin. A process of “dequalification” in which their diplomas and qualifications received in another country are not recognized, can accompany their migration and push them into different segments of the labor market. Class differences between employer and employee tend to become less significant. While “paid domestic work continues its long legacy as a racialized and gendered occupation [...] today, divisions of nation and citizenship are increasingly

salient” (Ozyegin/Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008, 197; cf. Anderson 2007; Gendera 2007; Sarti 2008).

Apart from the above-mentioned push factors which cause migration flows to post-industrial countries, there are important pull factors: progressive individualization in the global North, growing numbers of small households, the increasing female economic activity rate in combination with the persistence of an unequal gender-based division of reproductive work within households, as well as the ageing of the population, which has created an enormous demand for carers for the elderly. Within a neoliberal climate in which social services are re-privatised by nation-states, these factors encourage households to find individual solutions to structural problems (Haidinger 2007, 56) by outsourcing reproductive work.

Thus, over the past few decades, a body of feminist scholarship has emerged that critiques the precarious situation of the mostly female migrant domestic workforce and points to exploitation based on domestic workers’ comparatively vulnerable positions resulting from regimes of migration, citizenship status and labor market access that are informed by racist, classist and neoliberal ideologies. Unfortunately, the focus on the particular interdependencies between women as employers and women as employees<sup>2</sup> within the domestic realm fails to take account of, or simply assumes the fact that reproductive work is still importantly gendered. That is, we are looking at “differences within” (Moore 1993) the “group of women” at the expense of losing sight of the bigger, asymmetrically gendered picture, and – by doing so – also shrouding the positions and

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<sup>2</sup> Let me emphasize that the terms “employers” and “employees” may be misleading here, by invoking an association of a legal work relationship (cf. MAIZ 2004, 7). The majority of persons performing domestic cleaning in private households in Austria, however, are not employed in this sense as cleaning is typically performed as irregular work (cf. Biffl et al. 2011, 22). All households in my sample had such informal arrangements with domestic workers. Bettina Haidinger – in her study of women from Ukraine working in domestic and care work in Austria – also reports the widespread prevalence of informal working arrangements in private households (cf. Haidinger 2013, 82; 128).

responsibilities of bodily present men. In the vast majority of the research, men are “present” only as abstract points of reference within this discourse – as white, heterosexual, middle class – and are hardly found as bodily present beings, either in domestic-work-consuming households or in domestic-work-producing households. I would think that it cannot be the intention of this research to advance stereotypical gender arrangements within the domestic realm. Yet, the steady focus on the particular relationships between women and the void of research regarding men and reproductive labor seems to suggest that the oft-cited work/life balance is indeed a phenomenon limited to women.

Glendon Smith and Hilary Winchester’s study (1998) suggests that men also struggle to balance the different demands that arise out of the binary construction of the private versus the public sphere (331-332), in which the construction of masculinity is spatially manifest (328). Importantly, the two domains are not constructed as equals, as those spaces “socially constructed as ‘male spaces’, ranging from the CBD to the boardroom, are argued to reflect power” (ibid.). As Smith and Winchester note, the spatial structures of work and home perpetuate power and gender imbalances. Angela Meah (2014, 680) adds that the spatial structure that Smith and Winchester (1998) identified is itself in a process of transformation in which slippage between the two spheres takes place. I agree with Meah and emphasize that to understand these processes of transformation better we need very concrete analyses of what is changing and how it is changing.<sup>3</sup>

Masculinities, like all identities, are formed in specific contexts; in societies in the global North, dominant notions of masculine ideals, and of masculinity, are typically constructed – and researched – in relation to paid work and public workplaces. That means that masculinities have come to appear “naturally” associated with distinct aspects

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<sup>3</sup> Meah is contributing to this necessary research with her own work (cf. Meah/Jackson 2012; Meah 2014).

of life while unrelated to others; men at home are hardly visible within the academic discourse. Rosie Cox also laments this fact. In her work on the commoditization of home maintenance work in Aotearoa/New Zealand (2010; 2012; 2014) Cox argues that in this specific context home repairs are a masculine gendered responsibility, and a form of caring. She assesses that “DIY<sup>4</sup> offers (at least some) New Zealand men a way to care for others whilst performing an acceptable form of masculinity, in this circumstance doing care in the home and doing masculinity are not contradictory” (Cox 2012, 13).<sup>5</sup>

By bringing gender – that is men *and* women as relational constructions (cf. Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 848) – back into the discussion on the organization of feminine connoted reproductive work, and mainly focusing on men’s embodied practices within the private realm, I aim to contest the notion that the problematic situation around domestic service is “a women’s problem” (B. Young 2010).

Before turning to the question of how my research aims to bring men into the larger debate around the outsourcing of domestic work, I will discuss some of the key terms I am working with. In the following section, I explain how the concepts of responsiveness, affect, and responsibility, as well as epistemic ignorance, are relevant in my discussion of the organization of reproductive work, and thus how they are connected to the project.

### **Responsiveness, Affect and “Response-ability”**

Without responsibilities, we have no relationship.  
(Aunty Janet Turpie-Johnstone in a talk at ISJ, 29 April 2015)

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<sup>4</sup> Do-it-yourself

<sup>5</sup> Using Fisher and Tronto’s broad definition of care as a “species activity” (Fisher/Tronto 1990, 40), Cox found that in the context of white settler masculinities in Aotearoa/New Zealand carrying out home repairs was seen as “part of men’s relationships with family and friends and was understood by many to be a duty of care that they owed to family as well as an important aspect of their identity” (2010, 1).

It is taking responsibility that sets me free.  
(hooks 2004, 165)

I took down the quote opening this section from Aunty Janet Turpie-Johnstone in my notebook during a seminar at ISJ in April 2015. Aunty Janet, Aboriginal elder and appointed Anglican parish priest, was talking about her responsibilities, her obligations towards country, towards her community, towards generations past, present, and future. I perceive responsibility as rooted in being responsive to our interconnectedness. Responsibilities as interactional practices of connection then keep relations strong and ongoing. Influenced by Turpie-Johnstone's quote, I am looking at the matter from the other side. I claim that my argument that being non-responsive to our interdependencies cannot lead to responsibility also holds that not practicing our responsibilities will sever social bonds.

The notion of responsiveness not only carries a practice in its name, it also implies the specific *relational* act of responding. The actor is not an isolated "lone wolf" wandering the deserts of nothingness, but located in a particular context, a respondent to a claim coming from beyond an individual self to which the acting person becomes responsive to and is responsible to answer; the person is in relationships with others.

Importantly, I perceive responsiveness as a *corporeal* practice of opening up towards other human and nonhuman beings. Becoming responsive involves more than our intellectual faculties: our whole bodies are involved. Affects – in their quality as bodily sensations that go beyond the individual self – importantly structure the space in the "in-between" of responsiveness and responsibility. Affects "are diffuse and unstructured (re-) actions, immediate *bodily reactions* to energies, sensations and intensities that are not always clearly located *in* a person, but dispersed in space" (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 14,



italics added). Moreover, they “evolve within a concrete historical and geopolitical context” (5) and can disturb, but also stretch and reaffirm power relations (ibid.). I claim that these contexts are highly relevant when examining the emergence of practices of responsibility and *privileged irresponsibility* (Tronto 1993, 120-121; 1990<sup>6</sup>).

As I will outline in detail in Chapter 3, this thesis is grounded in an assumption of ontological interdependence. Feminist care ethics have long perceived humans as embedded in webs of interdependencies that sustain us and in which we are becoming; they focus “on the capacity of people to fulfil their day-to-day responsibilities to particular others” (Robinson 2013, 133). My concept of responsibility, which is in line with this tradition, is informed by both Joan Tronto’s notion of “relational responsibility” (2012) and Iris Marion Young’s model of responsibility based on social connection (2006). Tronto states that

humans always find themselves in relationships that produce responsibilities, and unless something goes horribly wrong in a person’s/group’s life, they remain within those relationships or create new ones. Those relations create and embody responsibility (Tronto 2012, 314).

“Relational responsibilities,” for Tronto, “grow out of relationships and their complex intertwining” (Tronto 2012, 303). Not the “substantive property of being human,” but some form of relation, “either presence, biological, historical or institutional ties, or some other form of ‘interaction’ – exists in order to create a relation and, thus, a responsibility” (306).<sup>7</sup>

In my development of the term responsibility, I emphasize that we have to acknowledge our interconnectedness in order to raise the value of reproductive work; and

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<sup>6</sup> According to Zembylas et al. (2014, 201), Tronto first uses the term in a paper titled “Chilly Racists” that she presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Tronto draws on Soran Reader (2003) in this passage.

it is in our *being responsive* to the inextricably intertwined interdependencies within which we are situated, that responsibility emerges. In other words: responsibility should be understood not in Kantian terms as obedience to some higher abstract ideal, but instead involves our everyday responsiveness to our interconnectedness. This implies, in turn, that being ignorant or non-responsive towards our relationships is an assault on the social bonds that sustain us, and renders impossible the practice of responsibility, as I conceive it.

Within the “social connection model” of responsibility, Young argues, “all agents who contribute by their actions to the structural processes that produce injustice have responsibilities to work to remedy these injustices” (2006, 102-103). Thus, when I speak of responsibility, I do not have a neoliberal, individualized notion in mind. To the contrary, in this thesis I understand responsibility as always relational and emerging in context; and, what is more, when it comes to the responsibility to remedy structural injustice, I take responsibility – borrowing from Young – to be essentially *shared* (Young 2006, 122). Young defines structural injustice to be in place

when social processes put large categories of persons under a systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time as these processes enable others to dominate or have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities. Structural injustice is a kind of moral wrong distinct from the wrongful action of an individual agent or the willfully repressive policies of a state. Structural injustice occurs as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting in pursuit of their particular goals and interests, within given institutional rules and accepted norms. All the persons who participate by their actions in the ongoing schemes of cooperation that constitute these structures are responsible for them, in the sense that they are part of the process that causes them. They are not

responsible, however, in the sense of having directed the process or intended its outcomes (114).

Young utilizes the case of the global apparel industry and the anti-sweatshop movement to illustrate her social connection model of responsibility (2006). She believes this model of responsibility can apply “to every case of structural injustice, whether local or global” (107).

Within the context of the organization of domestic cleaning in Austria, some individuals (men and women outsourcing domestic work) act in pursuit of their particular goals and interests (such as not performing socially devalued domestic cleaning, and having more “free time” for other activities that are higher valued). They do so within a specific structural context, and at the cost of others (mostly women in the outsourcing households and domestic workers). The pursued “solution” to the structural problem (that is the individualized and gendered organization of domestic work that lets this kind of work fall onto the structural position of individual women) that these men and women pursue is situated within a frame of accepted rules and norms. Outsourcing to migrant others – even if it is undeclared – is one such accepted rule. Similarly, we have the norm that those deemed fit for this particular kind of work are racialized, ethnicized and classed others, tinted by the *coloniality of labor* (Quijano 2000; 2007; 2008; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010; 2014a; 2014b), as I will discuss below. I will suggest that the broader phenomenon of outsourcing domestic and care work in this way is buffered by policies of nation-states. One such policy in Austria is the *Pflegegeld* (“care money”), government payments for people with special care needs. While the government is cutting back its budgets for healthcare, nursing and geriatric care these payments were introduced to facilitate peoples’ access to care, thus further privatizing and individualizing care work by moving it into the personal responsibility of citizens to locate adequate and affordable services

(MAIZ 2004, 7). This is what I think of when Young writes of an *incentive structure* as an ongoing process in which the different actors participate, that makes “some courses of action particularly attractive and carry little cost for some people” (2006, 114), while making them costly for others.

Young argues that although the most common model of assigning responsibility – what she calls the liability model – is indispensable in the legal system, this model is not sufficient for cases in which structural social processes produce injustice (118). In the case of structural injustice, an outcome cannot be traced to one particular action through a direct causal chain. Rather, many individuals contribute through their actions to the processes that produce an unjust outcome; accordingly, Young argues for the social connection model of responsibility “[o]ur responsibility derives from belonging together with others in a system of interdependent processes of cooperation and competition” (119). Our responsibility, Young argues, grows out of our being part of the process (ibid.).

As a consequence of this assumption, the social connection model of responsibility departs from the liability model in five important ways (119-125). First, it does not isolate, as it is not isolated perpetrators that create the injustices it interrogates. Second, it questions background conditions. As Young puts it, “[w]hen we judge that structural injustice exists, we mean that at least some of the normal and accepted background conditions of action are not morally acceptable” (120). Third, the social connection model is less backward-looking than forward-looking, in that it is not primarily concerned with the ascription of blame, fault, and liability for past action, than with reforming ongoing processes that are “likely to continue producing harms unless there are interventions in it” (122). Fourth, as the model does not isolate those who are liable by absolving those who are not, responsibility is essentially shared. Young draws on Larry May (1993) here who

distinguishes between shared and collective responsibility. With collective responsibility – i.e. that of a corporation – an entity can be said to be responsible without any individual members being personally responsible. By contrast, shared responsibility means that “[e]ach individual is personally responsible for outcomes in a partial way, since he or she alone does not produce the outcomes” (Young 2006, 122). As it cannot be determined and/or isolated what part exactly each person plays in producing an unjust outcome, the responsibility is essentially shared. Fifth, and following from the shared nature of responsibility, it can only be discharged through collective action aimed at positively changing institutions and processes. Again in Young’s words,

The structural processes can be altered only if many actors in diverse social positions work together to intervene in these processes to produce different outcomes. Responsibility derived from social connection, then, is ultimately *political* responsibility (123, italics in original).

Young’s conceptualization of the social connection model of responsibility is valuable for the analysis of the structural injustice prevalent within the outsourcing of domestic cleaning in Austria, and – I believe – other locations in the global North. I agree with Young that the social connection model has a rhetorical advantage by not prioritizing blame, and instead focussing on transformation. Instead of potentially triggering defensiveness on the part of those who hear themselves being blamed, and start blame-shifting and finger-pointing at others, the social connection model starts with the assumption that in cases of structural injustice there is always someone else *also* responsible. The model thus facilitates that we “call on one another to take responsibility together” (125).

However, according to Young shared responsibility does not mean that everyone who is responsible for a specific form of structural injustice is equally responsible. She

suggests that the parameters of *power, privilege, interest, and collective ability* are productive for reasoning about someone's action in relation to structural justice (125-130). This brings me to the important point that Tronto discusses regarding the relation between knowledge (and the lack thereof) and responsibility (2012, 311) in which I see power, privilege and vested interests to be importantly converging. Tronto poses the question: "How can people be held responsible for consequences that they *do not understand as connected to them* in any way?" (2012, 311, italics added). She suggests that "at the very least" people in the global North who "'don't know' the effects their governments and corporations" (ibid.) have on people's lives elsewhere, can open up to an understanding of a specific lack of knowledge as ignorance. Within asymmetric relationships – and Tronto perceives the asymmetry of relationships to be the norm (312) – there will be instances where ignorance is advantageous. "When the more powerful get advantages by ignoring the effect of the relationship on the less powerful, their ignorance proves beneficial" (311). This is why responsiveness is central to my development of responsibility. Along with Sullivan and Tuana (2007) and others scholars writing on *epistemic ignorance*, I argue that ignorance plays a crucial role in the emergence and reproduction of structural injustice. And I maintain that (cognitive, corporeal, affective) *non-responsiveness* is central to epistemic ignorance.

I read the widespread lack of interest in the living and working conditions of migrant domestic workers in Vienna in this vein. The focus on the outsourcing households' needs not only does not challenge, but also strengthens lopsided legal frameworks, perpetuating the precarious working conditions of the workers. In this sense, non-responsiveness towards the workers can be understood as backing the availability of "affordable" domestic services, with migrant workers willing to sell their labor below market rates.

Here I introduce the term *semipermeable membranes* to capture the asymmetry of these relations. In Part II of this thesis, I combine my understanding of human individuals as relational selves with affect theory, to develop an epistemology of connection (Collins 1991). Drawing on Catherine Keller's notion of the skin as contact-zone, rather than boundary (Keller, 1986; cf. Nedelsky 2011) in Chapter 5, I elaborate my concept of semipermeable membranes that structure the "contact zones," the unequal relations, between the various agents in the field of outsourcing. I use the notion of semipermeable membranes to highlight that injustice often does not lie simply in the fact that some (affective) path is "closed;" but rather that its state of openness or closedness is ambivalent, and the state and condition of this ambivalence is political. I will thus argue that what is or is not "let through" between individuals, households or nation-states, and allowed to affect them, is not accidental: the "letting through" is structured by a multitude of discriminating affective patterns.

As Young writes,

Different people and different organizations have divergent interests in the maintenance or transformation of structures that produce injustice. Often those with the greatest interest in perpetuating the structures are also those with the greatest power to influence their transformation (Young 2006, 128).

Because of these vested interests in maintaining unjust structures, Young argues, "external pressure on the powerful is often necessary to move these agents to action, and to prevent them from taking superficial steps rather than making serious change" (127).

Coming back to the notion of responsibility for now: within the scope of this thesis, I see responsibility as emerging out of social processes and out of our everyday responsiveness to our interconnectedness. I pay attention to "individual" practices of

responsiveness and responsibility in my small-scale qualitative empirical research, yet I do not take these practices to be isolated events; what “makes sense,” or “feels right” for specific informants in particular social locations must be seen as part of larger patterns. I am interested in these larger structures of responsibility and irresponsibility that are connected to/emerge in concert with the individual practices of my informants, as my aim is to work towards the transformation of structural injustice and epistemic ignorance in the realm of the organization of reproductive work.

Social structures are not static entities, but processes – what Anthony Giddens (1984) calls structuration – that are made and re-made in social interaction. Seeing individual practices and social structures as interdependent in this way connects individual everyday irresponsibility with structural injustice. I perceive the latter as partly growing out of the negligence of those structurally privileged to not assume their everyday responsibilities regarding socially devalued domestic work. It is also this inaction of the relatively privileged that keeps the spiral effect of the devaluation of said work, and the degradation of those performing it going, *and* – as part of the same process – enables the reproduction of the privileged’ status. Or, as Young puts it, “Where there are structural injustices, these usually produce not only victims of injustice, but persons who acquire relative privilege by virtue of the structures” (2006, 127).

### **Whose Responsibility? Or, what have men got to do with it?**

Reproductive work still has feminine connotations. Within a patriarchal system not doing reproductive work is thus a status enhancer for women, and feminist scholars have written about that since the 1980s (Ostrander 1987, 52; cf. Rollins 1985). Outsourcing domestic work reinforces and reproduces race and class inequalities (*ibid.*). Moreover, it *also* diverts challenges to patriarchy and reinforces gender inequalities. If reproductive work



stays exclusively associated with one construction of gender – women – the field will never substantially change. Qualitative empirical studies thus far conducted on male migrant domestic workers, by Francesca Scrinzi, Raffaella Sarti and others,<sup>8</sup> have shown that in cases where the workers employed to perform reproductive services are men, they are constructed as feminine. Importantly, these men are also racialized, ethnicized, and classed others. Within the outsourcing households, it is usually women who are still perceived as *responsible* for reproductive work. It is women who, in the dominant discourse, are “freed” from *their* duties by outsourcing *their* work; it is often women who organize and supervise the domestic workers (cf. Parreñas 2001; MAIZ 2004; Haidinger 2013).

I argue that by ignoring the presence of men as employers in domestic settings altogether, we fail to perceive the full scope of contemporary interdependencies and ultimately aid to construct a “women’s problem,” instead of challenging what really are societal issues of responsiveness and responsibility.

It is not “natural” that essential reproductive work is not regarded as societal work, but instead privatised; it is strange that women carry this individualized domestic responsibility alone, while men are not called upon to assume their share of domestic responsibility (Ostrander 1987, 52). It is indeed this constellation of gendered domestic responsibility as well as its privatisation that generates the high demand for domestic service in the first place.

In their analysis of four phases of care, Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto (1990) distinguish between “caring about,” “taking care of,” “care-giving,” and “care-

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. the special issue of *Men and Masculinities* on male migrant domestic workers, edited by Sarti and Scrinzi (2010)

receiving.”<sup>9</sup> They further assert that these phases are differently valued. “Caring about” and “taking care of” tend to be higher valued, whereas people involved in actual care work are devalued:

Not only are these positions poorly paid and not prestigious, but the association of people with bodies lowers their value. Those who are thought of as “others” in society are often thought of in bodily terms: they are described by their physical conditions, they are considered “dirty”, they are considered more “natural” (Tronto 1993, 114).

Tronto notes that these “others” have typically been people of color and/or women.

In this context, I claim that we should be alert to the fact that in most of the academic discourse on domestic service, men are only considered on an abstract level, not as bodily present, unless they are also racialized as in the case of male migrant domestic workers. This invisibility of men’s bodies is intensified in regard to heterosexual men (Morrison 2013), as I will highlight below when explicating my empirical research design and sample. The aim of this thesis is thus to bring men in outsourcing households (as embodied agents), and their practices, into the academic research on the outsourcing of reproductive work.

I think of the bodily absence within the scientific discourse as another layer of male privilege. The fact that men are rarely discussed in concrete terms – especially in the home – is thus reinforcing gender inequity (cf. Connell 2011; Gorman-Murray 2013). As Rosie Cox puts it: “[m]en are too often invisible in discussions of care, a conceptualisation which lowers the status of all caring activities” (Cox 2012, 13-14).

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<sup>9</sup> With “caring with” Tronto later adds a fifth phase of care (2013). She writes “This final phase of care requires that caring needs and the ways in which they are met need to be consistent with democratic commitments to justice, equality, and freedom for all” (23).

I suggest that we should be interested in what men actually do or do not do at home, how their bodies occupy domestic spaces, how they perform (in the) home, and how they practically relate and respond to other actors that they encounter there. Via the empirical research component of my doctoral thesis, understood as a critical interrogation of men's embodied positions and domestic practices, I first aim to challenge male privileges. Second, in a Gibson-Graham-inspired mapping of what is "out there" already (2006), I examine the presence and activity of men at home. This latter research should serve to accumulate potentials that we can draw on for transformation. I argue that furthering positive male identifications within domestic contexts is necessary for establishing a transformative politics of reproductive work.

I do not intend to play down the amount of physical, psychological and sexual violence that individual men use on a daily basis to exert their position of power within households adding to patriarchal structures all over the globe. Male aggression directed towards female kin as well as towards female and male domestic workers within the household is a reality. It is absolutely essential that we refrain from *further normalising* these harmful positions as "all there is to be found." Such thinking homogenizes male experience to a monolithic construct that perceives men as "damned" to reproduce patriarchal behavior – as having no other option (cf. Ashe 2004). Perceiving masculinities as taking shape in social interactions, as dynamic, multiple and contradictory, we find that just as there is no single "category" of women, there are no unified men.

There are tensions "from within." When Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmidt write "hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily translate into a satisfying experience of life" (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 852), they remind us that even men at the very top of social hierarchies cannot be perceived as "winners" within a patriarchal system that permeates all genders. I argue that this should serve us in accumulating potentials for

transformation. “Having responsibility,” apart from being responsible for doing one’s fair share of reproductive work, for me also means to amplify the content of *doing* this work, and thus legitimizing and normalizing men’s participation in domestic and care work. Looking out for positive male identifications within the realm of reproductive work should offer alternatives to the negative stereotypes shrouding men’s positions and practices. This move is not primarily for the sake of men, but to have a better foundation on which to call men to account for not changing patriarchal practices (Ashe 2004, 188), so that more men can really become responsible within their domestic contexts.

Before I further discuss the methodological approach of this study and my focus on the outsourcing households in Chapter 2, I shall elaborate on the constitutive framing of this thesis. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explain how the *coloniality of labor*, as a colonial/modern legacy of assigning value to different kinds of work, importantly shapes the particular conditions under which the outsourcing of reproductive work takes place in the Austrian context, and how the legal frame is shaping the individual interactions I researched there.

I agree with Bettina Haidinger (2013) that to focus on a single (welfare) state does not suffice to grasp the scope of the transnational relations within the private households that outsource domestic work, as it is the specific (inter)dependencies and relationality between particular states that shape the interactions between the actors. In her research on Ukrainian domestic workers in Austrian households, Haidinger uses the concept of the “transnational household” to do justice to the structural conditions that emerge out of the encounter in between differently positioned nation-states (81-82).

Since in my project I focus on the members of the outsourcing households, however, and the migrant workers the participants paid for domestic services come from a variety

of countries, my discussion cannot analyze the particular structural context of the individual, concrete encounters. I will give a general perspective on the situation in Austria, and highlight the importance of the colonality of labor for the field of outsourcing.

### **The Colonality of Labor and Structures of Ignorance**

I take epistemic ignorance to importantly shape the contemporary organization of reproductive work. In Chapter 5 I will elaborate how ignorance as a particular form of knowledge affects the interactions within private households. I do not claim, however, that epistemic ignorance is present on an individual level only – quite to the contrary. Writing about the social epistemology of ignorance as a *collective* effort José Medina (2013) writes:

How do individuals develop and maintain forms of irresponsible ignorance? Not alone, but with a lot of social support and collective effort. We become active participants in collective bodies of ignorance typically without knowing it and apparently without much conscious effort on our part, but this is because there is a complex set of social structures, procedures, and practices that encourage us to go on with our daily business without taking an interest in certain things, without challenging certain presuppositions and stereotypes, and without even learning to ask questions about distortions that are simply taken for granted automatically and habitually in the way we think and act (145).

In this section, I want to outline broader social structures (including legal relations) that are “ignorant,” that is here: unjust, which make possible the continued invisibility of domestic and care workers.

Before I get to the discussion of the empirical study I conducted in Vienna, Austria, which I weave in throughout Chapters 3-7, let me say first that explicit racism is hardly present in the statements of my respondents. Instead, it is the (re)produced invisibility of the domestic workers that epitomizes their unimportance and mobilizes their structural marginalization. Still, as I claim throughout this thesis, race and ethnicity are part and parcel of the structures of oppression intricately tied into the dynamics of the international division of reproductive labor. I argue that the *coloniality of labor* – a colonial/modern legacy of assigning differential value to particular kinds of work – is an important axis around which reproductive work is organized; also in Austria. For my geographical context, the importance of race and ethnicity as pivotal components in the logic of outsourcing shall be exemplified with reference to a passage from Sibylle Hamann’s book *Saubere Dienste* (2012, Engl.: *Clean Services*). Writing about the outsourcing of reproductive labor as a journalist, the *majority-Austrian*<sup>10</sup> Hamann worked as a domestic worker “undercover” as part of her investigation. The quote below portrays the encounter of Franziska, the alias Hamann uses as a domestic worker, with the potential employer Ms. S.:

Ms. S. responds to my advertisement, with a young, lively voice. She is surprised about Franziska’s ability to speak German without an accent. I had thought [the ability to speak German well] would increase my chances to get a job. Yet, the opposite is the case – at least with Ms. S. We are in her spacious apartment in an old building close to the city center, and my potential employer is starting to have doubts. She finds it odd to employ an Austrian woman, she says. “After all, you will have to clean my toilet as

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<sup>10</sup> The notion of *majority-Austrian* seeks to emphasize a social position in relation – being part of the majority or a minority group (Haidinger 2013, 18-19). Bettina Haidinger models the notion after *majority-Germanic* (FeMigra 1994), to emphasize a relational understanding of privileged positions within the Austrian context. Going beyond an additive model of being white, German speaking, Christian secularized, the term is meant to emphasize the locus of the intersection of important axes of differentiation, reflecting particular experiences.

well.” I reply that I am aware of that. Still, it would be awkward for her, she says. She would rather have a “real cleaning lady, a Polish woman for example,” for such intimate tasks. What is a Polish woman able to do, that Franziska is not? Where would I have to come from, to be permitted to clean her toilet, without weighing on her conscience (Hamann 2012, 11, translation from German by the author)?

The selected passage illustrates how, as a majority-Austrian, Hamann is not deemed suitable for the task of cleaning somebody else’s toilet. That is, how her ethnic origin determines her “character” (69). Rosie Cox (1999) describes this conflation of domestic workers’ personality traits with ethnicity for the British context; with British employers and agencies constructing the perceived suitability for a specific segment of the domestic service industry along class, gender, and ethnic stereotypes. Hamann gestures at the process of deskilling that leads to a situation in which migrant workers’ formal qualifications become irrelevant while ethnicity and nationality are seen as indicative of a woman’s “character” – indicative of what kind of work is appropriate for her (2012, 70-71). The above extract also illustrates the assumed appropriateness specifically of East European women to be domestic workers in Austria. The essentialist projections onto East European women as domestic workers cast them as “suitable” for this work within the private realm and thus as “safe.”<sup>11</sup> In a somewhat contradictory logic female East European domestic workers are also, simultaneously, orientalized. Bettina Haidinger mentions how Austrian media and film paints Ukrainian women as “unscrupulous, willing to marry, egoistic, and ‘transgressing borders’” (2013, 108). This is woven into a

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<sup>11</sup> Francesca Scrinzi (2010) and Lena Näre (2010) show how male migrant domestic workers are constructed as performing safe, feminine masculinities in Italy and France. Scrinzi found stereotypes of Indian men to be prevalent among employers as well as by training and recruitment agencies, in both Italy and France, that portray “sweet” Indian men, who “behave like women” (Scrinzi 2010, 53), as preferred domestic workers over other ethnicities. Näre (2010) found in her study of male migrant domestic workers in Naples, Italy, how men from particular ethnicities were constructed as “safe” and thus suitable for the domestic service industry. In Naples, it was especially Sri Lankan men who were constructed as asexual and thus sexually nonthreatening.

general perception of East European women as a *dangerous class*. Orientalizing imaginaries of female sexuality thus coexist with essentialized ascription of social inferiority to a particular ethnic (and gender) group. The East is fantasized as a place stricken by poverty, in which women perform immoral practices in the form of sexual and/or degrading services for other countries (as gestational surrogates, sex workers, and domestic workers). Note here how all of these “appropriate” services are not only feminized but indubitably physical – intricately tied to the body. The Ukrainian women Haidinger interviewed are quite aware of those images; they reflect on being “second-class foreigners” (108), actively countering and navigating the Austrian terrain (ibid.). Some criticize neoliberal globalization and its effects on the unequal conditions of reproduction they experience corporeally (108), as well as affectively, in these discursive spaces of the coloniality of labor.

Even though there are some larger patterns of racialization and ethnic stereotyping that transcend local and national contexts, the specific content of racialization and ethnic stereotyping are always context-dependent (cf. Näre 2010; Gallo/Scrinzi, 2016) and change over time. Their dynamic content is shaped by both the host context and the context of origin of a particular migrant. Since the focus of my empirical work is on the couples paying for domestic cleaning I will not go into detailed analyses of specific domestic workers’ experiences of ethnic stereotyping and/or the contents of particular racialization processes, with my claims in this section remaining largely general.

Let me now first outline how what Aníbal Quijano terms *coloniality of power* can be said to reverberate in the structures governing the contemporary organization of reproductive work. I will consider the Austrian legal frame that importantly shapes the living and working conditions of migrant domestic workers. Second, I will show why I consider



using the concept of coloniality to be appropriate for the Austrian context, even though the country was not a “proper” colonial power.

I argue that the broader structures of irresponsible ignorance shape and are shaped by the embodied practices within private households. I suggest that the racialization of affects (Ngai 2009) that I discuss in Chapter 4 is permeating both individual, and collective bodies.

### **The Coloniality of Power, and the Coloniality of Labor**

That specific basic element of the new pattern of world power that was based on the idea of “race” and in the “racial” social classification of (sic!) world population – expressed in the “racial” distribution of work, in the imposition of new “racial” geocultural identities, in the concentration of the control of productive resources and capital, as social relations, including salary, as a privilege of “Whiteness” – is what basically is referred to in the category of coloniality of power (Quijano 2000, 218).

Aníbal Quijano maintains that with the conquest of what became America, a new model of power emerged, that – for the first time – was a *global* pattern of power. In this process, starting with the occupation of America by Iberians and the British, the social classification of the world population came to be organized around the concept of “race,” “a mental category of modernity” (Quijano 2008, 182). In the coloniality of power, the notion of race was used to naturalize the cultural relations of Europeans and Non-Europeans (183; 2007, 171). New (capitalist) forms to control labor were pivotal in the configuration of this new global model “and in turn a fundamental element of a new model of power” (2008, 183). In the coloniality of labor, the new social classification of people along racial lines was combined with the control and organization of labor at that historical moment. Quijano argues that this coloniality of labor is still with us today. In

global capitalism a “worldwide expansion of colonial domination on the part of the same dominant race (or, from the eighteenth century onward, ‘Europeans’),” was imposed on all of the world population, using “the same criteria of social classification” (185).

The racist distribution of new social identities was combined, as had been done so successfully in Anglo-America, with a racist distribution of labor and of the forms of exploitation inherent in colonial capitalism. This occurred, above all, through a quasi-exclusive association of Whiteness with wages and, of course, with the high-order positions in the colonial administration. Consequently, the control of a specific form of labor could be, at the same time, the control of a specific group of dominated people. A new technology of domination/exploitation, in this case race/labor, was articulated in such a way that the two elements appeared naturally associated. To this day, this strategy has been exceptionally successful (185).

While the different forms of unpaid labor in America were distributed along the newly established racial categories of “Indians, blacks, and mestizos” (ibid.), waged labor was almost exclusively associated with Europeans and was seen as a white phenomenon. Importantly, “from the very beginning of the colonization of America, Europeans associated nonpaid or nonwaged (sic!) labor with the dominated races *because* they were [thought of as] ‘inferior’ races” (Quijano 2008, 186, italics added; cf. Quijano 2000, 217), and thus “not worthy of wages” (2008, 187). The distribution of different kinds of work and the context of the organization in which work was performed was based on the idea of racial inferiority/superiority. The racial categories were consequently naturalized and combined with the entitled view that those deemed inferior were “naturally obliged to work *for* the profit of their owners” (187, italics added). I see a variant of this ideology of inferiorization at play in the circular logic of the devaluation of domestic work, which is

unpaid or low paid, and the degradation of the corresponding workforce in Western Europe.

### *The Coloniality of Gender*

María Lugones expands Quijano's notion of the coloniality of power. Bringing the concept together with *intersectionality*, Lugones proposes a conceptual framing of what she terms "the colonial/modern gender system" (2007).

Lugones criticizes Quijano's narrow conceptualization of gender and the lumping together of sex and gender into one naturalized category. While Quijano deconstructs race as a "mental category" (2008, 182), without a biological base, "[s]ex, on the other hand, seems unproblematically biological to Quijano" (Lugones 2007, 193). Lugones thus complicates the account of gender present in Quijano's framework that is "too narrow and overly biologized as it presupposes sexual dimorphism, heterosexuality, patriarchal distribution of power, and so on" (Lugones 2007, 193). She critiques Quijano for assuming "patriarchal and heterosexual understandings of the disputes over control of sex, its resources, and products" (Lugones 2007, 189-190), and thus accepting "the global, Eurocentered, capitalist understanding of what gender is about" (ibid.). As I elaborate in Chapter 3, feminist anthropologists have long argued against the naturalization of sex, and have emphasized that the binary model of sex with "corresponding" gender, based on biological reproduction, must be seen as a "Western folk model" (Strasser/Schein 1997, 12f) to be interrogated, rather than presupposed (Yanagisako/Collier 1987, 15; cf. Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994).

Lugones bases her development of Quijano's argument in the logic of structural axes around which power is organized. This provides, according to Lugones, "a good ground from within which to understand the processes of intertwining the production of race and

gender” (2007, 189). It is this logic that “shows gender as constituted by and constituting the colonality of power. In that sense, there is no gender/race separability in Quijano’s model” (193). When Lugones thus proposes to use the models’ conceptualization of power structured around a colonial axis – without the narrow analysis of gender she criticizes in Quijano – and combines it with intersectional approaches to a modern/colonial gender system, it is in order to take serious that race and gender cannot be understood as separable categories. Modeled on Quijano’s analysis of the colonality of labor “as a thorough meshing of labor and race” (Lugones 2007, 191) in the global pattern of power, Lugones seeks to emphasize that race and gender too, since the beginning of the colonial expansion are co-constructed notions. Lugones argues that,

Considering critically both biological dimorphism and the position that gender socially constructs biological sex helps us understand the scope, depth, and characteristics of the colonial/modern gender system. The sense is that the reduction of gender to the private, to control over sex and its resources and products is a matter of ideology, of the cognitive production of modernity that has understood race as gendered and gender as raced in particularly differential ways for Europeans/whites and colonized/nonwhite peoples. Race is no more mythical and fictional than gender – both are powerful fictions (2007, 202).

The intertwining of gender and race comes to the fore when male domestic workers from Sri Lanka are considered especially apt to do reproductive labor in Naples because they are constructed as docile, effeminate and submissive (Näre 2010, 70); in short: more feminine than Italian men. As the racialized image of being asexual and hence sexually unthreatening is an advantage in order to get jobs, Lena Näre found that Sri Lankan men partially and strategically complied with these stereotypes. From her research on male migrant domestic workers in Italy and France, Francesca Scrinzi (2010) quotes an Italian

employer who portrays Indian men as “very flexible, very adaptable, and they have pleasant manners” (52). The respondent links her assessment to the “positive legacy of British colonialism” (ibid.). The masculine associated endeavour of British imperial conquest thus is thought to have produced these subservient colonial subjects, suitable for “feminine” work in Italian households.

Let me give another example from the field of masculinity studies to make visible this co-constitution of race and gender in context. According to Ann-Dorte Christensen and Sune Qvotrup Jensen (2014), in the Danish context gender equality is gaining traction to a degree where it is being incorporated as one of the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. As the normative way to be a man in this context now includes a narrative of gender equality, ethnic minorities – especially if they are working class and/or Muslim men – who supposedly do not share this value, are constructed as “too masculine.” In this predominately white society, Christensen and Qvotrup Jensen argue, whiteness is central to hegemonic masculinity. Since it is thus white men, who are seen to embody the dominant ideal, “ethnic minority men are often marginalized and ‘othered’ because they are (imagined to be) too masculine or (imagined to) have excess masculinity, that is, they are (seen as) carriers of atavistic, patriarchal, non-equality oriented forms of masculinity” (2014, 70). The colonial legacy implied in Eurocentric logics like these, in which the “progressive” is assumed to be white, is hard to ignore. Similar projections onto ethnicized/racialized men, which are used in myriad contexts – not least by the Austrian right – simultaneously serve to make white patriarchal practices opaque.<sup>12</sup>

We need to bear this critical co-constitution of gender and race in mind when approaching the current organization of domestic work in Austria. It informs who takes

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<sup>12</sup> Borrowing from francophone feminist authors, Francesca Scrinzi (2014) uses the term “racialisation of sexism” for this phenomenon.

over the outsourced domestic work: mainly “[w]omen who are poor, migrant or minoritized” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014b, 48); and it shapes how people performing this work are perceived – as feminized and racialized subjects.

### **Coloniality without Colonies**

Can the Austrian context be grasped with postcolonial theory? And what can decoloniality mean, if the country never was a colonial power? For the German context these questions have been raised by Hito Steyerl and Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, in the edited volume *Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?* (2012, Engl: Does the subaltern woman speak German?). In the introduction to the volume Steyerl and Gutiérrez Rodríguez assert that, in line with a general denial of the historic facts about Germany’s involvement in the colonial project,<sup>13</sup> there is an assumption that postcolonial power relations either never existed, or are irrelevant to the German context; that they describe processes that took place elsewhere, or are generally unspecific (8). Pertinent to my field of inquiry is the research on another neighboring country of Austria – Patricia Purtschert, Francesca Falk, and Barbara Lüthi’s (2016) examination of “colonialism without colonies” and the Swiss context. Purtschert et al. highlight how European nations that were not colonial powers themselves are nevertheless “implicated in transnational colonial systems” (299). Using the term *colonialism without colonies*, they capture the “presence and perseverance of colonial structures and power relations in countries that, according to the dominant (self-)perception, have neither been a colonial power nor a colony” (291). The emphasis on the epistemological dimension of colonialism, Purtschert

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<sup>13</sup> This is contrary to Hannah Arendt’s argument in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973). Arendt claims that the imperial colonial project of the nineteenth century introduced categories of power and identity without which the Holocaust would not have been possible. More practically, it provided the training ground for specific procedures and techniques later used by Nazi Germany.

et al. assert, has helped to bring to the fore “how the justification, the embodiment and the perpetuation of colonialism have been structured and supported by specific European systems of knowledge which have had a long-lasting effect” (293). According to Purtschert et al. “colonialism without colonies” is meant to address two aspects: “first, the striking *continuities* than can be detected between colonial powers and so-called colonial outsiders in view of cultural, economic and epistemic aspects of colonialism” (293, italics in original), that run across national borders. Without trying to diminish the important differences between former colonial powers and countries who did not impose colonial rule directly onto colonies, Purtschert et al. are thus seeking to broaden the analytical scope and consider “how some colonial elements originated or were significantly shaped in places that appeared to be exterior to colonialism” (ibid.). Second, Purtschert et al. argue, “‘colonialism without colonies’ helps us to investigate the peculiarities of nations that have built their self-perception on the idea of having been a ‘colonial outsider’” (ibid.). One such case is Austria.

Examining the entanglements of Western and Northern European countries that claim to have been colonial outsiders, Purtschert et al. especially focus on Switzerland. They argue that in all of these European countries that claim an outsider position, “a discourse of denial is prevalent” (289). Purtschert et al. maintain that

[f]ollowing this pattern, it is no surprise that certain similarities can be detected between Austria and Switzerland. Both subscribe to a politics of neutrality, which is also claimed in relation to colonialism, and none of them has been an official colonial power. Similarly to Switzerland, a strong amnesia surrounding colonialism, the slave trade and racism determines discussions in Austria (289).

From scholarship mostly coming out of Scandinavian countries that also explicitly thought of “themselves as outsiders within the European colonial constellation of power” (289), Purtschert et al. borrow the terms *colonial complicity*, and *colonial exceptionalism* for the Swiss context. I claim that both terms are also applicable to Austria. Complicity here “implies participation in hegemonic western discourses and their universalistic modes of thought and practices of dominance” (ibid.), as well as a “desire to ‘belong’” to the centers of colonial power (289). Purtschert et al. argue that many of these – in this regard – “peripheral” European countries “benefitted economically from the slave trade, used missionary activities to spread the idea that Christianity and the West were superior, and were directly or indirectly involved in colonial enterprises” (290). These claims hold for the Austrian case, where the fact that Austria was not a colonial power had little to do with an outright rejection of the concept. The Danube Monarchy’s late, and “failed,” efforts to establish itself as a colonial power are testimony to that<sup>14</sup> and may cast significant doubt on the “thesis of forgoing by choice.”<sup>15</sup> Retroactively, however, the fact that *colonial exceptionalism* of this peripheral position can be strategically claimed is an advantage. As Purtschert et al. maintain:

The postcolonial critique of exceptionalism makes apparent how often the perception of being a colonial outsider has been used as a means to a) effectively conceal one’s colonial entanglements and b) capitalize on one’s non-involvement after decolonization, i.e. after colonialism has become a relationship that is commonly understood to be economically and politically problematic as well as morally wrong (2016, 290).

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Austria Forum AEIOU: <http://austria-forum.org/af/AEIOU/Kolonien>, Last accessed the 01. 10. 2016 and

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Spiegel online: <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/spiegelgeschichte/d-67892040.html>, Last accessed the 01. 10. 2016



I argue that both the terms of colonial complicity, as well as colonial exceptionalism have traction in the Austrian context.

Yet, the Austrian context also differs from the aforementioned national contexts in significant ways. Scholarship on the applicability of postcolonial theory to central Europe interrogates the quasi-colonial power relations *within* the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Feichtinger et al. 2003). This is of relevance here, as the Habsburg monarchy did draw in geopolitically many of the spaces that today are exit countries for East European domestic workers. The interplay between lived diversity in this multi-ethnic Empire versus the construction of difference, partly instrumentalized to legitimize marginalization (Feichtinger 2006, 6), require a nuanced analysis. To deliver such an analysis goes beyond the scope of this thesis; still, I shall hint towards these complex imperial legacies<sup>16</sup> shaping the context of my study and lingering in the affective relations between outsourcing households and domestic workers.

The way Purtschert et al. are tackling what they describe as colonialism without colonies lends itself readily to the decolonial critique as Quijano (2000; 2007; 2008), and others are conceptualizing it. While Quijano's concept is grounded within a locus of direct colonial relations between colonizers and colonized, he argues that the logic of this relationship was later expanded to include the whole world population (2008, 185); he importantly distinguishes between *colonialism* and *coloniality*. As Lugones highlights, "Quijano also makes clear that, though coloniality is related to colonialism, these are distinct as the latter does not necessarily include racist relations of power. Coloniality's

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<sup>16</sup> For critical historiography on the colonial interpretation of the Habsburg monarchy cf. Kaps/Surman (2014); Wendland (2010); Ruthner (2008); Fuchs (2003); Prutsch (2003); Sauer (2002); Judson (1993).

birth and its prolonged and deep extension throughout the planet is tightly related to colonialism” (Lugones 2007, 191).

In what follows I will discuss what Quijano’s claim that the structure of global power “continues to be organized on and around the colonial axis” (Quijano 2008, 216) means in concrete terms for the organization of (outsourcing) reproductive labor.

### **The Coloniality of Labor and Domestic Work**

Following Quijano, inequalities in the labor market that we observe today “cannot be explained as detached from the racist, social classification of the world’s population – in other words, as detached from the global capitalist coloniality of power” (2008, 187). Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez draws on Quijano’s concepts of the coloniality of power, and the coloniality of labor, in her analysis of the organization of domestic and care work in Western Europe. Gutiérrez Rodríguez argues that “although it does not always explicitly operate in racial terms,” the “logic of subjugation inherent in the establishment of a racially coded social system *still reverberates* in the construction of the nation’s Other in Western Europe” (2014b, 49, italics added).

In this section, I will look at larger relations – such as nation state’s laws and policies – as responsive to varying degrees towards the different actors involved in outsourcing. I argue that the feminization and racialization of domestic work are interwoven. Moreover, these interwoven aspects are informed by and informing the policies of the nation-state which prove beneficial in the reproduction of a specific kind of organization of work. These are first, policies governing the field of “reproduction,” such as social budgets, or care policies; and second, migration laws, in combination with laws structuring access to the labor market for non-citizens. I will argue that through a strategic racialized control of the permeability of the national borders, the nation-state itself works the boundaries of the

national body as semi-permeable membranes; being permeable to some elements, and not others.

*Feminization and Coloniality of Labor in Context. Public Policies organizing “Private” Work*

The association of caring, affective work as “feminine” is not necessarily coupled to women performing this work.<sup>17</sup> It is the *kind* of labor – caring, serving – that is constructed as feminine (Haidinger 2013, 146). Bettina Haidinger argues that at the same time, however, this kind of work is associated with women being “naturally” responsible for it, and with actual women’s performances. Thus, reproductive labor is naturalized as “women’s work.” “It is an endless loop of mutually reinforcing stereotypes and practices associated with these stereotypes – doing gender, as social practice of gender differentiation” (146, translation from German by the author). This naturalization of reproductive work as feminine is illustrated by the quote from Vera, a Ukrainian domestic worker interviewed in Haidinger’s study.

It is easier for women to find a job here, in Europe. You can always work as a cleaning lady, or housekeeper, and so forth. A man has to have certain *skills*, as a mason for example; he has to be trained in certain things. Not everyone can lay bricks or tiles. But I believe for women it is... every woman can clean, or every woman can take care of children, or every woman can cook. Consequently, it is easier, I think (2013, 146, translation from German by the author, italics added).

Besides the naturalization of domestic and care work as feminine, the quote also illustrates the devaluation of reproductive work as “unskilled” labor. *Every woman –*

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<sup>17</sup> This is brought home not least by minoritized and/or racialized male domestic workers, who are constructed as “feminine” men (cf. Scrinzi 2010; Sarti 2010; Näre 2010)

supposedly – can clean, watch children, or cook. The skills required for the performance of these tasks and the necessary knowing how (Dalmiya/Alcoff 1993; cf. Chapter 5) are made invisible. Rosie Cox (2010) analysis of the differential, gendered ascription of skills (, and value) to paid, feminine-coded household work, versus outsourced masculine-coded “handymen” work in Aotearoa/New Zealand is of interest here. Cox found that

tasks traditionally done by women – and carried out by domestic workers – are constructed by employers as unskilled, boring, time consuming and repetitive; whereas tasks which are traditionally done by male family members and done for pay by ‘handymen’ are constructed as skilled, difficult, challenging and deserving of reasonable pay even when they require no formal qualifications or training (Cox 2010, 51).

While Cox’ informants who pay for masculine-coded domestic work of “hired hubbies” deem the tasks in question can be learned (by men), “women are expected to *inherently* know (rather than learn) how to do housework, and to be essentially suited to it in some way as part of their ‘caring’ role” (57).

The naturalizing discourse misses three important facts. First, many migrant domestic and care workers do have more skills, than the supposedly “natural” skills of caring and cleaning, as well as formal qualifications, which are not considered by the host society. Second, the specific skills required for performing reproductive labor need to be reclaimed as not “low”. In Austria, in addition to the general employment law covering domestic workers, a law on home help and domestic work (Haushaltshilfen und Hausangestelltengesetz) was passed in 1962 regulating pay, working time, daily and weekly rest, holidays, notice period, and social security insurance for domestic workers (Mather 2015, 19). Kristin Carls (2012) points out that “not only undocumented migrants and informally employed domestic workers suffer from a lack of rights and protections”

(11). Even workers with formal work contracts “usually only receive low wages and often have only limited access to labour rights and social protection.” And “[m]aximum working hours are longer than for other workers” (ibid.). This, I argue, has to do with the low value ascribed to this feminized labor. Third, precisely *not every woman* is constructed as “suitable” to perform this outsourced work. Cox (2015) points to the history of racialization of gender and class in the representation of working-class women in Britain. The physical closeness to dirt was perceived literally as “blackness on the skin” (261); and working class women were represented as “dark-skinned” and “as masculine in build and facial features” (ibid.). Cox concludes that “[d]ifferences in race, class and gender, therefore, cannot be easily separated from each other. Class difference was represented as gender and racial difference and women who were seen as ‘less white’ were also seen as ‘less female’” (261).

Cox argues that racialization – grounded in colonial legacies – can be read as a tool to sooth the tensions around social equality, which the employment of a domestic worker in the contemporary West brings to the fore.

Racialization, the ‘othering’ of one group based on a racial or ethnic characteristic, is therefore central to the organization of paid domestic work in many contemporary situations. Racialization makes natural a divide that is social, and offers a way to negotiate profound inequalities within the intimate space of the home (261).

“Recasting class and income differences as racial differences” (263-264), is hence preferential for employers; “focusing on national differences” (264), changes the narrative from one of exploitation into one of “providing opportunities to someone who would not have them at home” (ibid.). In this way, the racialization of the worker

provides the opportunity for the employer to think of oneself as “a kindly person engaged in a relationship of mutual obligation and dependence” (264).

Forms of racialization and ethnic stereotyping are not uniform across Central and Western Europe. That is, racialization is a dynamic process. Exactly who tends to be performing domestic and care work in a specific geographical location, at a particular time, varies. It is thus important to note, that not only the setup of the migrant workforce but with the particular content of racial or ethnic stereotyping, the projections onto the workers are context-dependent as well (Cox 1999; Näre 2010). Haidinger conceptualizes this as an “ethnic/gendered stigmatization and constructed suitability for certain jobs within the service sector” (Haidinger 2013, 114, translation from German by the author). In the Austrian context of outsourcing too, particular nationalities are favored over others. While, until the 1990s especially women from Turkey and the Philippines performed cleaning services, supply – and importantly – demand shifted towards women from Eastern Europe (*ibid.*).

While different national/racial/ethnic groups are deemed “suitable” to perform domestic work in different contexts, there are, however, similarities across contexts in the specific devaluations of domestic workers. Not least so, because they are informed by an underlying logic of coloniality. I argue that the Austrian legal context within which the phenomenon of outsourcing emerges can be said to reverberate aspects of the coloniality of labor. Speaking in Gutiérrez Rodríguez words:

It is through migration policies that differences are established between the national (citizen) and the newcomer (migrant) populations. Thereby, this process of differentiation reactivates a mental matrix that is rooted in colonial racial classification. While not explicitly operating within the racial matrix, migration policies reactivate this logic of differentiation

through classification of the population into different categories of citizens, denizens, and aliens (2014b, 48).

It has been argued, that relegating care services away from the state and into the private household further *feminizes* said work, as women disproportionately become responsible for caring for dependent household members (cf. Mader 2015; 2013; Haidinger 2013, 117; MAIZ 2004, 8). By way of privatizing social services, the state not only relies on female household members to provide care but also on a female migrant workforce (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014a, 194). Gudrun Biffl, Lea Rennert and Petra Aigner argue that in Austria “a complex system of family allowances [...] together with generous transfer payments to households [...] promotes the provision of personal services by households rather than the market” (2011, 22-23). Private households receive *Pflegegeld* (“care money”), cash payments from the state to subsidize the employment of a worker to care for physically and psychologically dependent household members (ibid; cf. MAIZ 2004). Hamann (2012) emphasizes that this policy encourages private households to outsource care for the elderly in the informal sector, as the payments are too low to cover the costs of care in the formal market (30; cf. Biffl et al. 2011, 22-23; Carls 2012, 3). I agree with Hamann’s claim that the Austrian state is thus complicit in the outsourcing of domestic and care work to migrant workers in precarious working (and living) conditions. The public authorities do not interfere, because of the lack of ability – or willingness – to solve the underlying structural problems leading to this kind of outsourcing. Hamann writes that “as much as the finance minister might want to intervene,” in the informal work relations, the social minister certainly does not (Hamann 2012, 30). In the segment of care for the elderly and/or people with disabilities who require care around the clock, the lack of available and affordable services was particularly striking – the discrepancy between legal situation and reality obvious. Still, it was not until the Austrian chancellor

at the time – Wolfgang Schüssel – was involved in a scandal about the “illegal” care worker for his mother in law, that the situation was considered untenable (31). Tellingly the scandal did not result in fraudulent charges being brought against former employers, including the family of the chancellor (32). Instead, it entailed a general amnesia and brought about the legalization of a previously gray area of the labor market; workers can now do this work legally as self-employed. Andrea Kretschmann, who analyzes the process of legalization of “care around the clock” (24-Stunden-Betreuung) in detail, maintains that the advantages of the legal change were strictly focused on the employers, and did not have the workers in mind (ibid.). As self-employed domestic workers under the 24hour care service scheme are not defined as employees and thus excluded from labor rights (Carls 2012, 8).<sup>18</sup> Other services of domestic and care work continue to be mostly paid for in the informal market in Austria, “with the implicit blessing of the authorities” (Hamann 2012, 32, translation from German by the author). In 2006 a service voucher scheme (Dienstleistungsscheck) was introduced in Austria, to regularize the employment of domestic workers by individuals or households on a temporary basis and below a certain earnings threshold (Mather 2015, 21). Again, the legalization had primarily the outsourcing households in mind. “[E]mployers are granted reduced social security contributions and sometimes also tax incentives, and the registration procedure to the social security system is simplified” (Carls 2012, 9). Yet, domestic workers, who fall under the Service Cheque Act are exempt from the general social security regime that applies to all wage earners and salaried employees; “payment by service cheque only includes insurance against employment injuries and occupational diseases” (ILO 2010, 59, n.1), not unemployment benefits (ibid.; Mather 2015, 21). Haidinger additionally

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<sup>18</sup> Biffl et al., however, warn that regulations against ostensible self-employment, in combination with perpetual restrictions to the labor market, will push migrants even further into the direction of the informal sector by “closing the last remaining loophole” of finding employment in the formal market (2011, 25-26).



highlights that the scheme disguises permanent work relations as temporary ones, leaving domestic workers without dismissal protection (2013, 118-119). Even after the introduction of the Service Cheque Act the host of domestic cleaning in Austria is done in the informal market, which is also the arrangement the households in my sample have chosen. Coming back to the *care money* policy, this is in line with a broader move throughout Western Europe to privatize social services.

While issues to do with personal care do receive some attention – mostly by way of this privatization discourse – “debates on domestic work are largely silenced” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014a, 195). In the lived reality and daily labor of domestic and care workers, however, care that is directed at a person and domestic work such as cleaning frequently overlap.

While personal care work, like childcare and the care of the elderly, is being publicly debated, domestic work remains hidden. It is not only domestic workers doing care work who are disregarded by the state focus on care work, but also the increasing numbers of undocumented migrant women undertaking care work in private households (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014a, 195).

Domestic work is hidden in plain sight, and so are domestic workers. State policies not only aid the reproduction of reproductive work as feminized. Migration and labor legislation throughout Europe are pivotal in shaping this work as feminized *and* racialized – leading to ethnically segmented labor markets (Gendera/Haidinger 2007; Gallo/Scrinzi 2016), influenced by the colonality of labor. I agree with Gutiérrez Rodríguez assessment, that “EU national migration policies support the exploitation of these workers and render them invisible” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014a, 195). Since it is mainly migrant women who work in domestic cleaning in Austrian private homes, I shall refer to the

migration regime in the next section. For migrant women, migration policies are crucial in determining their access to the labor market (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014b, 48; 2014a; Haidinger 2008; 2013).

As Raffaella Sarti argues, “[t]he choice, shared by many governments, of having a severe immigration policy and a relaxed attitude towards the enforcement of the laws against the employment of undocumented migrants is a highly ‘political’ choice” (Sarti 2008, 90). The complicity of the Austrian state that profits from having an “affordable” workforce in the country affirms this claim. In the following section, I will give a brief overview of relevant migration policies in Austria after WWII. This seems helpful in order to show how the migration regime in conjunction with policies regulating access to the labor market, “forces” migrant women into the precarity of the informal market.

*On the Reproduction of Ethnically Segmented Labor Markets. Or, how the Coloniality of Labor shapes the Field of Outsourcing*

Austria does not define itself as a country of migration. This is interesting, given that 10% of the people living in Austria are migrants (MAIZ 2004, 13). MAIZ argue that the principal of *ius sanguinis*<sup>19</sup> that is relevant to the award of Austrian citizenship demonstrates the ethnic-nationalist perspective of Austrian migration politics (ibid.).

Austria actively recruited foreign workers – directly in their countries of origin – in the 1960s. At that time of the economic boom after the end of WWII, the country needed additional workers. Modeled on the German “guest worker model,” the *Gastarbeiter*-scheme in Austria was also envisioned as temporary migration, with inbuilt “rotation” of workers (ibid.). As this workforce was in high demand, the “guest workers” did not want to leave, but were joined by other family members after living in Austria for ten years. In

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<sup>19</sup> Whereas children born to Austrian citizens are automatically granted Austrian citizenship – even when they are born abroad –, children born to migrants in Austria do not receive Austrian citizenship.

1974 a ban on recruitment was passed (ibid.; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 64). However, not all sectors of the labor market were covered under the general ban. Subsequently two policies – called *Inländerprimat* and *Generalvorbehalt* – were introduced. The former favored Austrian citizens on the job market over aliens, while the latter meant the employment of non-Austrian citizens is generally dependent on Austria’s economic and social interests (cf. MAIZ 2004, 14; Haidinger 2013, 113).<sup>20</sup>

The *Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz*, foreign labor law introduced in 1975, excluded non-citizens from specific social benefits and importantly introduced work permits that are tied to a particular employer. Gutiérrez Rodríguez analyzes, that “[t]his regulation has been modified by new laws without losing its fundamental principles of exclusion and restriction, resulting in ethnicized segmentation of the Austrian labor market” (2010, 64). It moreover strengthened dependencies of non-citizens on their employers (65). The worsening of working conditions and wages in sectors of the labor market with a high number of migrant workers was intensified by trade union politics’ focus on the protection of Austrian citizens (MAIZ 2004, 14).<sup>21</sup>

The guest worker program was replaced in 1993 with an annual quota system. From then on a work permit could only be received in combination with a residency permit (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 65). Formalized as *Fremdengesetz* (Foreigner Law) and *Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz* (Foreigner Employment Law) in 1993, these two laws

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<sup>20</sup> Austrian unions have traditionally had a restrictionist stance towards migrant workers. Biffl et al. note that this dates back to the demise of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and the “ensuing wave of migrant workers to Austria from the distant regions of the Empire” (2011, 26); and later the role of the unions in the reconstruction after WWII (ibid.). The *Inländerschutz* (principle of the protection of the interests of natives) was first introduced into law in 1925, at a time of financial crisis and “rampant unemployment” (ibid.). Surprisingly, though, this restrictionist stance was not changed in the 1960s at a time of labor scarcity. The principle of the protection of the interests of natives was abolished in the reform of the foreign labor law in 2011, because of its inconsistency with EU regulations, and with the introduction of the Red-White-Red cards (Biffl et al. 2011, 26).

<sup>21</sup> This narrow focus of Austrian trade unions is slowly broadening. In more recent developments a central contact point for labor union support for undocumented workers was established. Cf. <https://Undok.at>, Last accessed the 02. 07. 2016

addressing residency issues, and employment matters, were consolidated into one law in 2006 (ibid.). This *Asyl- und Fremdenpolizeigesetz* (Asylum and Foreign Police Law), has been criticized by Amnesty International and UNHCR as revealing xenophobia,

and that asylum is regarded as an ‘area of control’ rather than of protection as prescribed by the Geneva Convention on Refugees. While this legal framework seems to have shifted the emphasis from employment to control, the economic demand for a ‘foreign labor force’ still shapes Austrian migration policies (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 65)

In this legal framework, two different categories of “migrants” were established. EU citizen and refugees with the right to demand asylum make up the first class, while the second category includes generally all non-Europeans depending on “visas and the demands of the economy” (ibid.). To work in Austria the second group of migrants, that of third country nationals – or *Drittstaatenangehörige* in German – requires a residency permit and preceding work permit.<sup>22</sup> To apply for a residency permit, a work contract is thus required; however, residency permits are not automatically issued once a work contract is issued (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 65).

For sake of brevity, I cannot include a discussion of all the different residency and work statuses in Austria.<sup>23</sup> I shall, however, outline one important dimension here. Starting in 2003 long-term residency permits were only given to key personnel, with an educational training or work experiences that were particularly in demand in Austria *and* were expected to have a monthly income above a certain threshold (MAIZ 2004, 19; Haidinger 2008, 134). Workers who did not fulfill these requirements could only receive temporary permits. The latter pay into the Austrian unemployment fund, yet are not

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<sup>22</sup> Being found out to be working without a working permit, leads to an immediate deportation of a worker and a potential ban to settle in Austria for up to 10 years (MAIZ 2004, 18).

<sup>23</sup> The detailed information can be found on the governmental website <https://www.help.gv.at>, Last accessed the 03. 07. 2016

granted “workers’ rights to employment, health and social benefits” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 65; cf. MAIZ 2004, 18). They cannot switch to another legal employment and have no right to family reunification, or to apply for a long-term work permit (MAIZ 2004, 18). For workers with temporary status, the termination of a work contract entails the loss of residency (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 65).

MAIZ note that for workers in certain sectors of the labor market it would be difficult to qualify for the category of key personnel simply because the wages in traditional “women’s jobs” – such as care and social services, home care and domestic services – are plain and simple too low to meet the requisite threshold (MAIZ 2004, 19; cf. Haidinger 2013). Again, feminization and coloniality of labor intermesh. The devaluation of feminized work has a direct impact on the status of migrant women. Although in high demand in Austria, domestic and care work is not perceived as “skilled” work (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 66), which affects migrant women differently than men. The changes to the Immigration law in 2011 (*Fremdenrechtsänderungsgesetz* 2011) replaced the quota system for skilled migration with the so-called *Red-White-Red card*, a point based system modeled after the Canadian immigration regulation (Biffl et al. 2011, 15). The main aim of the changes was to regulate and facilitate the migration of highly skilled workers to Austria, with a stronger than the previous view to the demands of the Austrian labor market.<sup>24</sup>

Unemployment has more severe effects on third-country nationals than on Austrian citizens, as an application for emergency or social assistance can be seen as “proof” of loss of income or livelihood, which can lead to loss of residency (Haidinger 2013, 116; MAIZ 2004, 16). The exclusion from basic social support and other factors pertaining to

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<sup>24</sup> cf. the Republic of Austria Parliament Website, Parlamentskorrespondenz Nr. 377 vom 13. 04. 2011: [https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR\\_2011/PK0377/](https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR_2011/PK0377/), Last accessed the 15. 11. 2016

this group only, raise the pressure for migrants looking for employment. These structural conditions make it more likely for them to accept bad working conditions,<sup>25</sup> or to agree to work in the informal market (MAIZ 2004, 17).

Last, the majority of women who migrate within the legal frame to Austria still do so as part of family reunification (19-20). Their residency status is dependent on their status as “wives.” In the case of a divorce, they lose their residency permit (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 67).<sup>26</sup> Women who migrate to Austria as part of family-reunification often only gain access to the formal labor market after eight years of living in Austria. This fact increases the economic dependency on the waged household members (MAIZ 2004, 20). It also pushes women to work in the informal sector. Biffl et al. note: “undocumented stay and work is only one of several possibilities” (2011, 24). “Due to the structure of the immigration system”, they elaborate, “there is a category of migrants which resides in Austria legally,” (24) but is either not allowed to work at all or “faces considerable barriers when it comes to accessing the formal labour market” (ibid). Restrictions merely push workers from the formal into the informal sector (Biffl et al. 2011). As these informal jobs exist, by definition, “outside of all the wage and labour standards that unions have fought for” (50), the “availability of informal labor, especially in low paid fields, exerts a noticeable downward pressure on wages (evident, for example, in the field of home care [...]), thereby affecting formal sectors of the economy as well” (50). I maintain that this dumping of wages for reproductive labor further drives the devaluation of this work.

MAIZ note that policies targeting discrimination focus on individual, personal discrimination; they thus have an inbuilt, constitutive blind spot regarding discrimination

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<sup>25</sup> When migrants accept bad working conditions, Austrian enterprises profit in turn – since employers benefit from the flexibility, low wage and workplace demands of the workers (MAIZ 2004, 17).

<sup>26</sup> This legal situation of dependent residency status creates major obstacles and a particularly vicious context of double victimization for women affected by domestic violence (Çitak 2008).

by the Austrian state – the most significant perpetrator when it comes to the discrimination against migrants (2004, 83).

### *Semipermeable National Borders*

I argue that the Austrian nation-state, via its migration policies and labor legislation, is structuring the supposedly “private” business of outsourcing domestic work by making its borders *semipermeable* towards migrant women working as domestic and care workers in Austria. The national borders are permeable for migrant women in a specific way. Many legal residency titles entail limited access to the labor market (cf. MAIZ 2004). Considering the case of “undocumented” migrant workers: the Austrian nation-state shape-shifts its borders to be permeable to their workforce, yet not to their whole embodied being. The workers are “let through;” yet, they gain no right to family reunification. Their work contributes to the national economic growth (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2014a, 195); yet, they work without additional costs to the state – under precarious conditions, excluded from any social benefits, unemployment and health insurance (ibid.; Haidinger 2013; MAIZ 2004). That is, the Austrian migration policies and labor laws not only aid in producing an affordable supply of domestic labor to the outsourcing households, but it is also “cheap” for the Austrian state, who profits from shirking its’ responsibility.

I claim that these structural relations are irresponsible in two important ways: First, the Austrian state does not take responsibility vis-à-vis the (undocumented) migrant domestic workers who perform the necessary labor within the informal market of Austrian households, without being accorded with the rights citizens are. Gutiérrez Rodríguez argues that “[t]hese laws drive ‘migrant workers’ into illegality, while their labor force is in demand, for example, for the hospitality, care and domestic service sectors” (2010, 66).

In this way, the Austrian state can be said to produce these “illegal” workers. Second, the state is not acting responsibly on the issue of domestic and care work of its citizens either and recreates the invisibility of domestic work on the state level.

Ignorance is central to this process. At the state level, the invisibility of domestic workers is advantageous. The state profits from the availability of “affordable” services its citizens require, without having to grant the workers providing these services the rights of citizens. The ignorance on the state level matches the non-responsive practices that I will discuss in the coming chapters within the individual households. By rendering invisible domestic workers, as absent “other” (Quijano 2007, 173), the nation-state maintains an epistemology of ignorance (Collins 1991). By ignoring existing relationality, by profiting at the cost of others (i.e. domestic workers), Austria’s outlook – in this case via its’ migration regime – continues to be in line with the colonial pattern I highlighted at the start of this section.

I thus aim to underline the continuity between the coloniality of power reverberating in the laws and policies retraced here, with the broader imagery regarding people from different ethnic/racial backgrounds in Austria, migrant domestic workers in particular. I claim that mental and legal frames are influencing each other. Affects – that carry (colonial/imperial) “residues of meaning” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 5) play a significant role in this co-constitution, as I will elaborate in Chapter 4.



## Chapter Overview

I call Part I of this thesis “Outsourcing Responsibility.” Chapter 1 was divided into two sections. First, I outlined the topic of this thesis: the aim to integrate the positions of men in outsourcing households, and their embodied practices, into the academic research on outsourcing. Second, I discussed the constitutive frame of coloniality within which my research takes place. In Chapter 2 I elaborate my empirical research in private households in Vienna, Austria, and I explain in detail my focus on men’s domestic performances. Moreover, I discuss my research design and triangulation of methods that made the men’s practices of attentiveness and responsiveness accessible to me.

The larger frame of Part II of this thesis, entitled “Social Relations in Domestic Spaces,” follows two main objectives. First, critiquing the dominant Western concept of the modern individual as independent or isolated, I draw on alternative conceptions that perceive humans as relational and interdependent as well as affectively permeable. Second, I argue that the myth of containment prevalent in the modern West strengthens non-responsive practices and aids the reproduction of asymmetrical and unjust structures within the organization of domestic work that “ignore” the interconnected nature of humans.

In Chapter 3, I discuss different notions of the self. In the modern West an understanding of the individual as independent, autonomously driven by the force of one’s mind, and bounded in a way that neatly maps onto the space of one body has become dominant. What is more, the notion of the individual that was popularized by contract theory inscribes whiteness and maleness into this supposedly “neutral” individual. I sketch the version of humans as bounded and supposedly self-sufficient in order to contrast this notion with alternative traditions. While there are myriad of

traditions responsive to interdependence as the condition of the human (and nonhuman) world, I mainly draw on feminist care ethics. I add that with the ascendancy of the bounded self coincided the fading out of energetic relationality between humans from the dominant perspective. I argue that the transmission of affects is integral to the relations between the members of outsourcing households and domestic workers in the private sphere. In the second half of Chapter 3, I discuss theories on the social construction of masculinities that are fruitful for my undertaking. Via this excursus into the field of masculinity studies that I combine with a nuanced conceptualization of identity, I elaborate my perspective of masculinities as gender identities within this thesis.

Continuing to weave the notions of responsiveness as well as affects into my discussion, I claim that depending on how open we are to our interdependencies and on how we are affected by the connections we live in our specific social bonds are shaped. In Chapter 4 I argue that these interactions importantly take place within (unequal) relations of power that shape responsiveness in/and our affective relations. I elaborate my understanding of responsiveness, as involving praxis, and as shaping perception and thus connected to our (cognitive, corporeal, affective) processes of knowledge formation. This latter dimension relates practices of responsiveness to epistemic ignorance (as I will discuss in Chapter 5). I analyze how privileged irresponsibility, as basis and consequence of social inequality, is produced in everyday interactions. Speaking to dirt and subjectivities, I discuss abjection and objectification of domestic work and its workforce, as underpinned by an epistemology of separation. Drawing on alternative epistemologies, I point towards different (strategic) uses of responsiveness and non-responsiveness, which are related to different subject positions within these unequal relations of power. Even in cases where domestic workers and their employers do not meet, they interact via sharing the same spaces (of the outsourcing households). Through the transmission of affects in

these spaces, the social and economic inequalities between the differently positioned subjects are felt bodily by both employers and employees – albeit in different ways. In the last section of Chapter 4, I argue for a productive reading of the affective “spill-over,” sensed by some of the employers as “guilty feelings.”

After discussing notions of the skin as contact-zone, rather than boundary, I elaborate my own term of “semipermeable membranes” that structure these contact zones in Chapter 5. This concept of semipermeable membranes is essentially a thinking together of my understanding of responsiveness with arguments coming from the literature on epistemic ignorance. That is, I use the notion of semipermeable membranes to underline that injustice often does not simply lie in the fact that an (affective) path is “closed,” but rather that its state of openness or closeness is ambivalent. I will hence argue that what is or is not “let through” between individuals, households or nation-states to affect them can be non-accidental: structured by a multitude of discriminating affective patterns. I analyze the gendered phenomenon of “tolerance of dirt” (*Schmutztoleranz*) as illustrating an interlinkage of inattentiveness to dirt and certain (dominant) notions of masculinity and argue for an understanding of that *Schmutztoleranz* as an epistemic category. Discussing the situatedness of knowers and the relevance of knowing how and experiential knowledge, I maintain that corporeality and particular lived experience are central to the formation of knowledge around domestic work. I draw on literature on epistemic ignorance to expose the structural hindrances that stand in the way of transformation towards justice within the realm of reproductive work. That is, the prevalence of a non-accidental incompetence to perceive certain relations and inequalities in the context of outsourcing. I relate the argument that structural injustice produces irresponsible agents to responsiveness, or – to be more precise – to non-responsive practices. I finally show how

the outsourcing of domestic work is utilized to avoid (gendered) conflicts between the partners in the outsourcing households.

Part III, “Beyond Critique,” consists of Chapter 6 and the Conclusion.

In Chapter 6 I discuss the implications that actually *doing* reproductive work has – especially for men, who carry out substantially less domestic and care work than women in the current distribution of said work. I start by outlining the benefits of caregiving for men’s wellbeing and highlight the nature of this work as potentially burdensome *and* pleasurable. I argue that performing reproductive work, including domestic cleaning, facilitates the emergence of attentive and responsive embodied practices and thus aids the development of responsibility. Having embodied knowledge about the skills involved in domestic and care work, and experiencing the conditions under which this devalued work is performed, I argue, will help in a broader effort to valorize said work. I thus argue for the ethical and epistemic effects of doing domestic work that can counter epistemic ignorance in this realm, and be seen as the building grounds for a transformative politics of reproductive work.

## 2

# Methodology

Juxtaposing the private households with the dynamics of global interdependencies, the local face of the gendered and racialized division of work of the modern/colonial world system becomes a tangible and immediate reality in private households in Western Europe. It is in this regard that the legacies of a colonial order, reactivated through racial and gendered segregation in the labor market and dehumanizing migration policies, are felt on an individual level and mobilized in our everyday encounters (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 3).

Throughout this thesis, my aim is to highlight how local practices and larger (global) structures are intertwined and influence each other. Let me reiterate that I want to bring the gendered division of reproductive work, and the embodied positions the individual men I interviewed in Austria occupy therein, in conversation with the debate around “global care chains” (Hochschild 2002).

My normative commitment in this doctoral thesis is to challenge unjust structures in the field of the outsourcing of domestic work, which I see as entangled with broader issues of non-responsiveness, and shaped by Eurocentric, colonial, heteronormative, and misogynist discourses. I do so by making tangible, concrete places and practices that help

reproduce said structures; and, what is more, I want to contribute to working towards a transformative politics of reproductive work that appreciates the value of domestic and care work. In this chapter, I outline how these normative commitments inform my empirical research design and present the methodological framework of the thesis.

### **(Men's) Bodies in (Domestic) Space**

Acknowledging the ontological condition that humans are embedded in webs of interdependence, my normative claim is to work towards a transformative politics of reproductive work, starting from responsiveness. How can “what men actually do” fit into this framework? In my empirical research, I am particularly interested in men’s practices of responsiveness and embodiments of responsibility. Through my qualitative research project, I aim to decipher how the concepts of *responsibility* and men’s *bodies* are interwoven in daily practice. In the final step of my analysis in Chapter 6 I highlight how domestic practices of attentiveness and responsiveness that emerge in the performance of domestic work can be seen as potentials for transformation towards social justice.

#### *Embodied Spaces*

Approaching the locations men occupy and work on/with in the home as “embodied spaces,” I follow the anthropologist Setha Low in underscoring the importance of the body “as a physical and biological entity, lived experience, and a center of agency, a location for speaking and acting on the world” (Low 2003, 10). Referencing Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987), Low asserts that the supposedly “pre-cultural,” Western concept of the self, mapped onto the space of the body, and thought of as separated from the rest of the world, is indeed itself culturally and historically specific (Low 2003, 10-11). In her examination of the “career” of the body within anthropology, Low points to

the discipline's earlier difficulties in developing concepts that do justice to the "organism itself, and the effect of cultural influences on it and its operations" (12). Instead, ethnographies of the body have treated the body as a spatial metaphor and representational space. New and creative ways to understand "body/space/culture [...]" allow us to theorize and imagine the body as a moving, speaking, cultural space in and of itself" (16).

According to Low, this theoretically powerful concept of body/space/culture marks a radical shift in anthropological thinking, which previously separated these domains, and resolves the dilemmas associated with crossing micro/macro boundaries from the individual body and embodied space to macro analyses of social and political forces. These reflections are highly relevant for my project, in which I map actual men's embodied practices of responsiveness and responsibilities and connect them to an analysis of global care chains.

### *"Normal" Homebodies*

Within masculinity studies, geographers have advanced the understanding that the construction of gendered identities and power relations is spatialized. Through the powerful ideological distinction between private and public spheres, masculine identity performances are more often than not defined by association to their (paid) working environments, and are also more likely to be studied in spaces outside of the house – in work or public spaces – than at home (Gorman-Murray 2008a, 368; 2013, 139; cf. Smith/Winchester 1998).

As "doing gender" (West/Zimmerman 1987), the performance of domestic work at home can stabilise traditional gender identities (cf. Cameron 1997; Koppetsch 1998, 2008; Natalier 2003). At the same time, the home-space also holds potential for

transformation that can take us beyond the binary of reproduction/subversion. Glendon Smith and Hilary Winchester assert that “home” can be perceived as a space that potentially enables men to negotiate alternative masculinities: where they can be expressive, emotive and engage in domestic labor and child care (Smith/Winchester 1998). In contrast, “the constraints of paid employment [can] enforce [...] ‘austere’ hegemonic models of masculinity” (Gorman-Murray 2008a, 368). Furthermore, alternative gender performances challenge traditional concepts of “family” and the “home” itself. As Andrew Gorman-Murray points out, while “the home enables ‘new’, diverse styles of masculinity, these changing domestic masculinities equally contest normative imaginaries of home” (369). Gorman-Murray illustrates that bodies and homes are mutually constitutive, and uses the term “homebodies” to refer to the idea that homes produce particular bodies. Again, the body is seen as “a space in and of itself” (Gorman-Murray 2013, 138) yet the *personal* space is not an *individual* space, but “also the primary site of social experience and interpersonal encounter” (ibid.). Understanding the home-space as a key site for consciously and unconsciously constructing and affirming a sense of self, Gorman-Murray, in line with other critical studies of men and masculinities, emphasizes that neither “home,” nor “identity,” nor the relation between them, can be considered fixed:

Identities are fluid, composite and fractured, composed of multiple axes of difference and ongoingly changing. Likewise, as a site for constituting the shifting self, home is not a fixed space, but remade over and over again through everyday homemaking practices that reflect changing personal identities (Gorman-Murray 2008b, 287).

In my empirical research, I work with this process-related, embodied, multifaceted concept; a concept that takes identity to be in interaction with the context and space in



which it is situated, as well as interdependent with other human actors in the existential process of identification. Given the relevance of the concrete home-spaces of the participants, the research mostly took place there.<sup>27</sup>

Gorman-Murray points to the legitimacy of studying “mainstream” masculine homebodies, suggesting that they are important exactly because of their apparent “normalcy,” “their quotidian setting, their adherence to certain facets of hegemony, and thus their role in constituting and reconfiguring the contemporary gender order” (Gorman-Murray 2013, 143). The men in my sample, who are all white, middle-class, and living in opposite-sex partnerships in Austria, can be understood as *embodying* “normalcy” as such. Though over-represented in many settings, men in this structurally powerful position are under-interviewed when it comes to domestic and care work in private homes.

In the introduction, I have thematized the fact that men are rarely visible in discussions of care (Cox 2012, 13-14). I have also gestured to the low value ascribed to people who are associated with bodies (Tronto 1993, 114). Moreover, the invisibility pertinent to men’s bodies is especially pronounced in the case of heterosexual men. Carey-Ann Morrison calls for more work that focuses on the link between heterosexuality and home. She argues that research on how homes *become (hetero)sexualised* through performance and practice would encourage a “more critical understanding of the normative and powerful ways in which heterosexual bodies and domestic spaces are mutually constituted” (Morrison 2013, 415). Such an undertaking would offer a direct challenge to

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<sup>27</sup> The first face-to-face meetings with the participants in the serial approach of my research were the individual interviews. For this research phase I chose to let the participants decide whether they wanted to meet with me in their own flats/houses or in the apartment where I was based during my fieldwork in Vienna; following, half of these interviews were conducted in my temporary home, and the other half took place at the participants’ places. All of the home-tours, joint interviews, and go-alongs took place in the informants’ homes.

the perceived “aspatiality” of heterosexuality (ibid.). In her empirical study (2012), Morrison found that many of her heterosexual respondents failed to notice their heterosexuality as a sexual subjectivity. As an “invisible, unmarked category” Morrison perceives heterosexuality as paralleling other dominant social identities, such as masculinity, able-bodiedness and whiteness (Morrison 2013, 426). Morrison asserts that, influenced by the underlying Cartesian dualism:

Western rationalist thinking deploys a separation between mind and body that affords supremacy to the mind. Certain people have come to be negatively associated with corporeality. Sexual dissidents, in particular, are constructed as Other and are often aligned with the body and with sex itself (427).

Heterosexuals, in contrast, tend to be associated with institutions such as marriage, home and family that construct their relation in ways that go beyond the “merely sexual” (428).<sup>28</sup>

My empirical research focuses on the embodied practices of white, middle-class men in opposite-sex relationships – in short, on people who supposedly do not have (soft/vulnerable/dependent/home-) bodies. My research thus challenges abstract, hard-bodied, masculine idealisations such as the warrior, the athletic “machine,” or even the factory worker, all of which have been established in disconnect from the softness and vulnerability of human corporality and by extension from the work of care. Instead, I am interrogating actual men’s domestic practices and performances in order to make visible the mundane bodily presence of the supposedly bodiless. Why do I do that? If – as I argue – responsibility emerges out of our embodied practices of responsiveness to our

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<sup>28</sup> We might speculate in what ways this “exclusivity” is changing in so far as LGBT couples are becoming part of these institutions.

interconnectedness, we need to be bodily present and involved in order to be responsible in, and through, the daily interactions that constitute and reproduce homes as well as selves.

Donna Haraway (2008) too, emphasizes the embodied nature of responsibility. She suggests that, “caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions” (36); and, Haraway continues, “these mundane, prosaic things are the result of having truck with each other. Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making. [...] Touch and regard have consequences (ibid.).

### *Revaluation of Reproductive Work*

The revaluation of care work that feminist philosophers (cf. Weir 2008b; Kittay 1999; Tronto 1993) have called for is part of my vision for a transformative politics of reproductive work. I understand this valorization to be associated with an argument for a more equal distribution of reproductive work that includes the participation of *men*, and that requires the actual *performance* of domestic and care work (also cf. Nedelsky, forthcoming). In a talk on the phenomenon of the excessive outsourcing of tasks from private households in the U.S. Arlie Hochschild points out that even if we do not ourselves participate in this outsourcing, the fact that others around us do will change the way we conceive these tasks: namely that we primarily understand them as goals to be achieved, and not as processes that are themselves of value.<sup>29</sup> Via the integration of domestic chores into a market economy, we might, according to Hochschild, begin to see these tasks even in their unpaid domestic contexts primarily as boxes to be ticked off,

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<sup>29</sup> Hochschild’s talk titled *We have outsourced ourselves* took place as part of the Festival of Dangerous Ideas, at the Sydney Opera House, on 2 November 2013. (<http://fodi.sydneyoperahouse.com/we-have-outsourced-ourselves>). The examples of reproductive tasks she used ranged from paid dog walkers, to childcare, wedding planners, people who organize family pictures into albums or videotape Grandma’s oral account of her life history, to commercial surrogacy in India.

rather than perceiving value in the *process* of their performance. I want to emphasize that both frustration and exhaustion and pleasurable and satisfying effects can arise out of the performance of reproductive work; and, I argue throughout this thesis and with special focus in Chapter 6, that actually *doing* this kind of work is important for its revaluation. Thus, my empirical focus on men's – and women's – *practices* in relation to reproductive work is a result of my normative claim for its valorization.

In the next section, I will outline and explain in detail what I *did* and what I *failed to do* in my empirical research in Austria.

## **Empirical Research**

In this thesis, I relate the empirical data produced in Vienna to the overarching theme of embodied responsibilities regarding the global organization of domestic work. I focus my study on men's – and women's – practices within the domestic realm in households that pay for domestic services, and analyze my data with regard to the broader societal frame within which these “isolated” households are situated. As will become apparent throughout the following chapters, I situate the material coming out of the empirical research I conducted vis-à-vis the theoretical discussion in a way that juxtaposes the different kinds of material without seeing one of those sources as really “primary.” To say the same thing in different words: I understand the material that grew out of the interaction between the participants in the study and me as a voice entering a conversation with the theoretical work I am drawing on rather than one being an “application” or “evidence” of the other. By doing so, I am undermining the positivistic distinction between the two. Although the triangulation of methods in my research design includes more creative methods such as *go-alongs* and *home-tours*, which I will discuss in detail below, I also importantly draw on individual and joint interviews, and thus on methods

that are associated with a positivistic research approach. Therefore, there is a certain degree of tension about my aim to go beyond the positivistic paradigm that I may not be able to resolve fully.

The method of the interview has especially been scrutinized within social sciences for the study of everyday practices, as it is seen unfit for the task of accessing *embodied* knowledge. My project which researches embodied practices of responsiveness and responsibilities, and affects in everyday contexts can thus be seen as requiring more creative research methods than merely “talking about.” I draw on Russell Hitchings (2012), who argues against the assertion that using interviews to research routine practices is inappropriate “either because such practices are too difficult for respondents to talk about as a result of having sedimented down into unthinking forms of embodied disposition or because this method is out of step with a current enthusiasm for research styles that do not focus unduly on the representational” (61). Discussing arguments made by three main proponents of social practice theory – Bourdieu, Giddens, and Schatzki et al. – Hitchings asserts that talking to people about matters of their everyday life is still valid for accessing embodied knowledge. What is more, he highlights, via drawing on examples from his empirical research, how vastly different groups of informants “emerged as entirely able to talk about relatively mundane actions” (65). Hitchings concludes that while other techniques of qualitative research should not be discounted, in that they “obviously access alternative aspects” (66) (e.g. how practices are done) there is still value in using interviews to research routine practices. Researchers in this field who discount qualitative interview methods altogether do so, according to Hitchings, “at their peril” (ibid.).

Marjorie DeVault, who, following Dorothy Smith’s approach, uses interviews to examine everyday activities in her book *Feeding the Family* (1991), understands her

informants as “speak[ing] in particular ways not because they see the social organization of their setting, but because they know how to conduct the work of the setting” (29). Her participants’ “vocabulary,” DeVault argues, “the taken-for-granted concepts that organize their talk, the structure of their accounts, all serve as features of the talk that expresses the social organization of the work” (ibid.).

Again, my focus is on men’s practices of responsiveness and responsibility. Being aware of the fact that masculinities – just as femininities – are societal constructions that emerge out of social interactions between individuals and groups, I not only conducted interviews with men but considered the other persons in the “home environment” (Moss 1997). Pamela Moss argues for replacing the term “household” with “home environment,” “which incorporates more fully age- and ablement-sensitive readings of the spaces constitutive of domestic space” (Moss 1997, 23). The term “home environment” is meant to reflect the fact that relations that constitute the household are

not spatially confined to the physical, material dwelling. They extend outward [...] Conceptually [the “home environment”] would be able to incorporate relations constitutive of maintaining a home, the various sites within which specific material social practices take place, and the experiences of those relations in particular sites (24).

In a similar vein, Gillian Rose, in her reading of family photography as a practice, asserts that “homeliness is not bounded by the walls” of a house, but “stretches beyond them” (Rose 2010, 51). Importantly, a relational concept of home is not static but momentarily circumscribed within the wider social political economy as well as within social interactions between individuals (Moss 1997, 25). Its boundaries fluctuate in response to

the changing needs, wants and desires of individuals, as well as in accordance to access to resources (ibid.)

Following Moss and Rose, I defined the cases in my sample as comprising of opposite-sex couples who live together and employ a domestic worker, plus one domestic worker per couple. This was already a very restricted sample composition: it did though include the main people who importantly contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of the “home.” Thus, I initially planned to interview domestic workers, who, due to their particular location as “outsiders within” (Collins 1986) hold valuable insights into the field I am researching. Unfortunately the reality in the field – the precarious working and living conditions of workers in this mostly informal segment of the labor market and the discrepancy between their positionality and mine – in combination with the limited time I had in the field made the access to domestic workers extremely hard to establish for me. I finally let go of the wish to conduct these interviews. I discuss this in more detail below. However, since the focal point of the empirical component of my doctoral thesis was from the start on men in the outsourcing households, the research is still tenable.

Informed by the literature on the outsourcing of domestic work from private households in Austria and elsewhere, I anticipated that access to potential participants would be difficult, both because my research focussed on the private realm, and because of the mostly informal kind of employment prevalent in this area. But finding research subjects was even more difficult than I had expected. It turned out to be nearly impossible to find outsourcing couples via sending the call for participants to email lists and putting it on blackboards in Vienna – the way I had originally envisaged. The route that finally bore fruits was to recruit informants by passing on the call via my extended circle of acquaintances. In retrospect, this avenue of recruitment turned out to be beneficial, as it led to mostly very high levels of openness on the part of the research participants. I think

that the fact that there was some form of referential relationship between the informants and me, and – importantly – a similarity in our social positions facilitated this kind of trust.

Although my primary research subjects are white<sup>30</sup>, middle-class men in opposite-sex relationships, I chose also to interview their female partners. Gill Valentine remarks that interviewing all persons within a household increases the complexity and sophistication of accounts, adds depth by exposing the negotiated and conflictual basis of household relations and decision making, and enables the dynamics of household relationships to be explored (1999, 67-68). Though interviewing couples together provides richer, more detailed, and validated accounts than those produced by interviews with individuals (68), such conversations are rarely completely free of power dynamics. In contrast, interviewing couples apart enables respondents to express their opinions more freely (71). These reflections on the advantages and disadvantages of different interview situations led me to a research design in which I interviewed couples both together and individually.

I interviewed couples with and without young children. The nature of the domestic work required in these different household types varies in accordance with their composition. However, from the beginning of this research, I was less interested in how the men “father,” as this dimension tends to be more highly valued in the hierarchy of domestic responsibilities and is more often covered in the literature. Rather, I was most interested in the more “banal” aspects of reproductive work, for instance, how men perform daily chores such as tidying up and sweeping the floor that are not highly

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<sup>30</sup> Please note that whiteness was not a selection criterion on my part. My call for participants was for opposite-sex couples, aged 35-50 (I ended up with an age bracket from people in their early thirties to mid-forties), living together in the same household in Vienna, and paying for domestic cleaning services regularly.



esteemed yet are central in the social reproduction of their homes and connected to the well-being of the inhabitants of their home-environment. As I will elaborate below, part of my research was to *go-along* with the men in my sample while they performed mundane daily chores. Here I followed Margarethe Kusenbach's description of the method of the "go-along" (2003). Kusenbach highlights the importance of leaving the choice of the routine that the researcher can attend to the participants. In practice, this meant that I ended up with three men in my sample opting for cooking, and thus for a rather highly valued chore.

Since I used a serial approach to conducting this research, in which I met with the members of each home-environment multiple times, generating extensive and rather dense data, my sample size was small. As is usually the case with qualitative research, being representative is not the primary point here – with the key objective rather being to generate new insights about the reasons behind, and the interrelationships of different aspects of a phenomenon. Thus, I was primarily interested in unearthing the deeper patterns at play in outsourcing, the reasoning my informants employed, and how their particular practices "made sense" in context. I do not claim that the small sample interviewed was a reduced image of "normal" society as a whole. Quite to the contrary, the ten informants – five opposite-sex couples – in my study in Vienna are from a quite particular societal segment. Before I get into the elaboration of the methods I used to gather and analyze my qualitative data, I shall describe the sample of the empirical part of this study.

The men and women in my sample are all white, middle-class, in their early thirties to mid-forties, living in opposite-sex relationships in Vienna and regularly pay for cleaning services in their private homes. The workers who perform paid domestic cleaning for them at the time of the research come from Bosnia, Croatia, and Poland. Three of the

couples I conducted my research with were parents of one child, with all of the children younger than two years; two couples did not have children at the time of the study. The participants are well educated – all but one of the informants have studied at University level – and work in professions in fields ranging from finance and medicine to public relations and telecommunications. One of the participants was a University student at the time of the research.<sup>31</sup> All of the informants speak German, which is the first language of all but one of them. The research was conducted in German, which is also my first language.

As I briefly stated above, I took a serial approach to the research process. For the participants, this approach meant that they had time between the meetings, to process and reflect on the research – to get a feeling for me as well as to get to know the research situation and my way of questioning better. The advantage of this approach for me as the researcher was also that it allowed time to go through the collected material, to familiarize myself with what each of the respondents had said previously, and to identify useful lines of further questioning (Hitchings 2012, 66).

The research was conducted in three phases: first, individual interviews, second, home-tours and joint interviews with the couples together, and third, go-alongs with the men in the sample only. I audio-recorded all steps and transcribed all of the individual and joint interviews, as well as the go-alongs. Moreover, I took field notes immediately after each of the research events.

I first conducted semi-structured interviews separately with the men and women in my sample, which lasted between half an hour and one and a half hours. In these individual interviews we covered five main areas: First, I asked my respondents to narrate in detail

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<sup>31</sup> See the Appendix for information on the participants.

what concrete everyday *activities they performed* at home. This included domestic work, but also leisure activities. I asked about activities they liked and disliked and asked them to describe with as much detail as possible what it was exactly that made a particular activity feel pleasurable or not. The theme of the second main area of questions was *relationships and connections* within the household. Here, I asked if and how the presence or absence of other people changed the participants' perception and usage of the space and if domestic work was also performed together with others. Third, we talked about the *domestic workers*; about how the couples came to pay another person to do their domestic cleaning in the first place, whose idea it was and who was organizing and paying the services now. I asked the participants to talk about their relationship with the domestic worker and what they know about her<sup>32</sup>, as well as the specific tasks they outsourced to the domestic worker. In the fourth group of questions, we talked about the *distribution of the remaining tasks* among the couples. I asked whether there was explicit talk about their allocation of chores, and if there was ever conflict about the division. I also asked about extra-domestic activities and their distribution between the couples. The fifth main theme evolved around ideas of *gender equality* more generally. Finally, the individual interviews were always concluded by posing a question about the general satisfaction of the informants with their living arrangements, followed by a "utopian brainstorming" in which I prompted the participants to envision their perfect home scenario.

There was also an array of questions concerned more explicitly with the materiality of the domestic spaces, including spatial perception and use of space, a focus that was again brought to the fore in the home-tours. I felt that this would have made a second thesis, and thus it was mostly left out of this one.

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<sup>32</sup> All of the domestic workers the informants talked to me about were women.

As I have argued above with Hitchings (2012) and DeVault (1991), I take methods of interviewing to be useful in the research of everyday practices. My research on affects, practices of responsiveness and embodiments of responsibility within the private sphere demanded a more diversified empirical approach than *solely* “talking about.” For the individual interviews I had left it up to the interviewees to decide whether they wanted to meet me in their domestic spaces, or come to my temporary home in Vienna; half of them chose the latter option. The second phase, the *home-tours* and joint interviews, took place in the participants’ homes. This access to their private spaces is central for two reasons. First, because it is perceived to be easier for informants to talk about certain routine aspects of everyday life, while physically being in those spaces (cf. Kusenbach 2003); and second, it was important in order for me as the researcher to have access to my participants’ presence in the actual spaces in which the practices I investigate are taking place.

I started this research phase by asking the couples to take me on a tour of their homes and to describe to me, room by room, the purpose of the spaces and who uses them doing what. I specified that since they know the spaces so much better than I do, to please also detail things that seem “obvious” to them. Furthermore, I asked my informants to elaborate what spaces they specifically like or dislike and to explain why. Kusenbach argues that even when they do not involve encounters with other people, routine spatial practices are social in nature and that “places represent others, and our feelings towards them” (2003, 474). Thus, one of the main purposes of the home-tours was to provide insights into what other persons there are “doing stuff” within these rooms that contribute to the creation and reproduction of the specific home space; I assumed that this would include domestic workers and quite possibly other persons as well. However, my participants hardly mentioned the people working on and in these spaces during the

home-tours. This meant that this method did not bring the kind of data I had expected; it did, however, underline the invisibility of the domestic workers and/or the fact that most of the employers are not present while the workers are cleaning.

As I pointed out, the serial approach allowed me already to look over the data previously gathered while in the field. I transcribed most of the interviews while doing the research. This meant that I was able to use the joint interviews, which took place immediately after the home-tours, to pose questions that had arisen out of the individual interviews and to cover topics that I felt had not been discussed enough. Again, I transcribed the joint interviews, and later analyzed both content and dynamics of the conversation – how the two respondents relate to each other, confirm, correct, or add to each other's account.

For the third and final phase of the empirical component of the research I employed the method of the go-along as developed by Margarethe Kusenbach (2003) and accompanied all men in my sample – as the primary research subjects – in some of their domestic routines. Kusenbach emphasizes that the hybrid method of the go-along has some advantages over both ethnographic interviews and more classic participant observation by being better suited to access pre-reflective knowledge, practices of the body or the most trivial details of day-to-day environmental experience (Kusenbach 2003, 462). Kusenbach perceives the go-along as particularly beneficial for investigations within the private sphere and argues for a mix of methods. Among other research topics, she explicitly names topics related to perceptions and spatial practices that profit from the method of the go-along. I asked the men in the first two meetings about specific domestic tasks for which they are “responsible,” and asked if they were comfortable with my presence when they carry out the tasks. Following Kusenbach (2003) and David Evans (2012) in the go-alongs I talked to the respondents while they performed tasks they

usually do, which allows “for a focus on talk as part of situated action” (Evans 2012, 44). The routine practices, chosen by the men in my sample, were cooking (3), cleaning the floor with a steam broom (1), and cleaning the kitchen and doing the dishes, after the female partner had prepared a meal (1). This approach allowed for me to take part in small segments of the everyday lives of my informants without transgressing too far into their private space (Evans 2012, 44). During the go-alongs, I conversed with the men about topics that evolved from the social situation itself, as well as posing questions about things that I felt demanded special attention. I did not participate in the chore itself; instead, I observed what they were doing and asked them to comment on the tasks while I went along.

While the go-alongs, and to a lesser degree the home-tours, influenced my contextual knowledge of the home-environments I was researching and were helpful in the interpretation of the data, I hardly draw on this material directly in the text. In the chapters of Part II, I almost exclusively use quotations from the individual interviews. In Part III, when I am more directly concerned with practice and performance and focus on practices of attentiveness and responsiveness as a potential source for transformation, I will use the go-alongs more directly in the text.

Now let me say a thing or two about what the analysis of the empirical material looked like. Importantly, I was interested not only in the content but also in the discourse of the conversations with my informants, that is, how my interview partners responded and reacted to each other, as well as to me and to my questions; where there were points of confusion or misunderstanding, how the respondents changed topics, or potentially disagreed with my assumptions. Thus, I made the dynamics of these conversations accessible to the analysis. Ralf Bohnsack's (2000) and Aglaja Przyborski's (2004) work

was central to me here. Their reconstructive methods pay attention to the organization of research discourses via highlighting the referential and interactional dimensions in the communication between participants. Though I did not apply the method of analysis outlined by Przyborski as “documentary interpretation,” I partly draw from her toolbox to analyze important turns of interaction in the research. This approach is reflected in the way I transcribed the material. I included utterances such as “uh” and “uhm,” features of delivery (whispering, pauses, sarcasm), as well as descriptive information on how the talk transpired (including overlapping talk, re-starts, sighs, and laughter), as these details are central to the interpretation of interactions (Roulston 2014, 299f). This is also in line with an understanding that my embodied presence as the researcher played a part in the co-construction of the data.

After the transcription of the entirety of the data coming out of the individual and joint interviews, as well as the go-alongs, I used the Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) NVivo to store and organize the data – that is to locate and examine phenomena of interest. The reduction of data is always theoretically informed, and one’s particular perspective in good part shapes what one identifies as areas of interest. In order to still remain open towards the material, rather than “forcing data to fit preconceived hypotheses” (Roulston 2014, 306), in this first step of abstraction I coded all of the material – rather than only the passages that immediately stood out for me – and cross-checked within and between the cases for similar arguments or similar discursive turns in the conversations. By way of this method, I tried to be responsive myself towards the informants and towards narratives that I had not expected or seen before. Here I found NVivo to be helpful in that it allows the analyst to connect the same passage in the transcript to several codes or topics. This facilitated seeing meaningful connections between particular passages and making it relatively easy to keep track of

how larger topics are related, despite the sheer volume of the data. I read and re-read the transcripts and also listened to the audio recordings again, checked between the different interviews and rechecked in the initially coded passages in NVivo and by doing so filtered out what eventually became the relevant themes I am covering within the scope of this thesis. I do not, however, perceive this process of abstraction from the empirical data as theory development as such. Rather, I see the themes coming out of the empirical material as voices I put in conversation with the theoretical material I am drawing on to arrive at an analysis of the larger topic of outsourcing domestic work from private households.

The empirical part of this project was conducted in a language other than the language of the thesis – namely in German, which is my first language. I decided to remain within this language as long as possible and thus made the analysis mainly in German. I say mainly because I instinctively switched more and more to English with a growing degree of abstraction, mostly because the terms used in the latter stages of the analysis were those coming from the theoretical literature I had read in English. Following, the transition from German to English was a rather organic one for me. I did not translate the empirical data, though, and only translated the passages that made it as quotes into the written text. There are a few instances in those selected extracts in which I remain dissatisfied with my English translations and uncertain about how to best capture an important word or formulation used by the respondent. I highlight these in the text by adding the German expression in the footnotes.

In the last section of this chapter, I shall now discuss the difficulties in recruiting domestic workers for the empirical study.



### *“Failed” Research*

In her article *Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality and Feminist Research* (1994) Kim England asserts that, since the actual *doing* of research is typically disregarded under the paradigm of neopositivist empiricism under which the personal is excluded from accounts produced, it is important to highlight that “research is a *process* not just a product” (82, italics in original). England argues,

[p]art of this process involves reflecting on, and learning from past research experiences, being able to re-evaluate our research critically, and, perhaps deciding, for various reasons, to abandon a research project (82).

As I mentioned above, in my original research design I had planned to include perspectives of workers cleaning other people’s domestic spaces. Leaving out the persons involved who are routinely silenced, I felt, would mean to suppress one essential part of the story I wanted to tell.

In my research outline, I had concluded that since the field of domestic service is marked by significant power imbalances it would have been questionable to include domestic workers along with their actual employers in this study. For one, the workers themselves might have felt pressured to participate in the study and thus not given their consent freely. In addition, such a setting could have had a detrimental impact on the employer-employee relationship upon the completion of my research, potentially leaving domestic workers in vulnerable positions. Therefore, I decided in the conceptual outline of the study to contact domestic workers who were not connected to the couples in my sample but who worked for employers within the same social, cultural, legal and geographical context.

The line of inquiry I had in mind was to ask domestic workers to describe their position within households they work for. How do they experience their presence in their

work environment? Domestic workers have insight into the home environments of several households they work for as well as into their own domestic spaces. For this research, I was primarily interested in their work environments. Hence, my aim was to focus the questions on their contact persons within the outsourcing households and how they relate to the different members of the home environment. I wanted to ask about their beliefs concerning gender roles within the household as well as how they viewed the gender arrangements of the couples they work for.

It turned out that making contact with informants who work as domestic workers in Vienna was difficult. My own positionality as *majority-Austrian*<sup>33</sup> made the access to the different groups in my initial study outline – that is men and women in domestic work-outsourcing households, and domestic workers – differently challenging. Fieldwork, England (1994) argues, “is a dialogical process which is structured by the researcher and the participants” and “the researcher’s positionality and biography directly affect fieldwork” (80).

I am not standing on “neutral” ground. Although I do not, and would not, employ somebody else to do my domestic cleaning for me, in the context of outsourcing I was perceived as a potential employer of domestic workers, and I felt a shift in my social location and self-understanding vis-à-vis my respondents. When recruiting members of domestic work-outsourcing households, it turned out (after the initial difficulties in finding informants) to be manageable to access this group of research participants via my extended circle of acquaintances. I could not, however, gain access in this way to the

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<sup>33</sup> Bettina Haidinger uses the term “MehrheitsösterreicherIn” (majority-Austrian), modelled after “mehrheitsdeutsch” (majority-Germanic) (FeMigra 1994), to avoid additive enumerations in the style of “white, German, Christian secularised” that suggest a parallel existence, instead of taking serious the important intersections and the relationality of concepts and contexts. The term of “MehrheitsösterreicherIn” then, rather seeks to emphasize a social position in relation – being part of the majority or a minority group (Haidinger 2013, 18-19).

domestic workers. To break this down: I know people personally who *pay for* domestic services. I do not know people personally who *work as* domestic workers.

The two main avenues I used in contacting domestic workers were, first, to look through ads that they had placed online, send my call via email and call them to ask if they were interested in participating; second, to ask around in my circle of friends in Vienna if anyone knew people providing cleaning services to the group of employers described in my sample directly and to pass on the call and ask if they were interested in participating in my study. Within the limited time I had for my fieldwork, I only managed to conduct one interview with a woman providing cleaning services to private households and one with this women's mother who did the same work.

I think that some of the reasons why the women I reached out to did not respond and declined to participate were that they were not interested in academic research at all, were unclear about the aim of my study, did not speak German well enough, or thought that they did not. One of the women I spoke to on the phone – a friend had known her personally and had asked if I could call her – was very enthusiastic and friendly when we first started talking. We spoke in German, me in my mother's tongue, she with an accent. After I had reiterated that I wanted to interview her about her experiences as a domestic worker in private households, it turned out that she had assumed that I wanted to inquire about her cleaning my apartment. She made very clear she was not interested in the interview. I lacked time to gain an avenue of access to this group of informants that would have made possible the required trust, necessary for the interviews to go ahead. But more substantially, I felt, I lacked a trustworthy connection, someone who would vouch for my integrity in this sensitive context to potential research participants.

The only two interviews I conducted with domestic workers were with Anelia<sup>34</sup> and with her mother Fidan, coming from Bulgaria and Turkey, whom I had found via the ad Anelia had placed online. Anticipating that it would be difficult for the workers to talk about personal experiences to someone whom they did not know at all, and who was situated differently in regard to the power relations in the research encounter (cf. England 1994, 85; Haidinger 2013, 18-19), I started the interview by telling a bit about my background. I grew up in a small village in the Austrian countryside; I am the first in my family to study for this degree. I continued by saying a few things about the study and that Anelia's and Fidan's knowledge was important to me. The interview that followed lacked depth and detail; the discrepancies between our societal positions were overshadowing our interaction. As England puts it, "recognizing or even being sensitive to these power relations does not remove them" (1994, 85).

I wanted to hear what these women had to say, but I was in no position for them to tell me. "We are differently positioned subjects with different biographies, we are not dematerialized, disembodied entities" (85). As a researcher, I am an instrument in my research (84); one that cannot be left out. I am positioned as a white, young, cisgender woman, majority-Austrian, with a particular biography, "all of which inhibit and enable certain research method insights in the field" (ibid; also cf. Code 1993, 39). In hindsight, it was "ambitious" to think that I could create a space of trust in a one-off meeting between these women who work in structurally marginalized positions in domestic cleaning in private households and me; and maybe presumptuous to ask for their time, their attention, their knowledge, without offering much concrete in return.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> All the participants' names have been altered.

<sup>35</sup> The only thing I could offer was monetary compensation for the duration of the interview. While "paying" participants is usually not standard practice at all in qualitative empirical research, where the interest of informants in a particular topic should be the deciding element in the deliberation to participate, I follow MAIZ' approach to compensate domestic workers for travel and interviewing time (2004, 41), as

In lieu of my own research, I draw on studies from Bettina Haidinger (2013) as well as MAIZ<sup>36</sup> (2004) from research they conducted with migrant domestic workers in Austria directly. I include passages from both of these qualitative studies where relevant in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. Let me illustrate exemplary how Haidinger and MAIZ managed the question of access.

Haidinger's book (2013) focuses on Ukrainian women in domestic and care work in Austria. This research was conducted over several years, in which she interviewed Ukrainian women in Vienna, but also travelled to Ukraine several times to do interviews there. She approached her participants through private contacts as well as special meeting places of Ukrainian migrants and online platforms. Haidinger also broaches the issue of the importance of establishing a relationship of trust between her as a majority-Austrian, respectively another interviewer, and the interviewees (18). Those informants, who were confident with interviews in German, were interviewed in this language. Additionally, one of the successful strategies Haidinger employed was to bridge the power asymmetries between her, as the interviewer, and the interviewees by conducting the conversations through a translator as well as having a trained colleague carry out the interviews in Ukrainian and Russian. Not only the same language but also similar experiences with the Austrian migration regime made these interview situations more egalitarian between interviewer and interviewee (19). Haidinger adds that the translators not only translated the interviews but also took part in the interpretation of the material, and aided in the contextualisation of idioms and the understanding of referential knowledge. Another important approach by Haidinger was to factor in circumstances impeding openness for

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the particular situation of migrant domestic workers – that is, their precarious working conditions – warrant such compensation. Anelia and Fidan both received 30 Euros compensation for the time of the interview. Participants from the domestic work-outsourcing households did not receive this compensation.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.maiz.at/en>, Last accessed the 01. 03. 2016

the participants (such as residence permits), and to discuss at length description and objectives of the study as well as the researcher's biography and motivation.

MAIZ is an autonomous centre organized for and by migrant women. In the study I am drawing on (2004) they also conduct research with domestic work-outsourcing households, yet underline that as a migrant organization they consciously claim partiality with migrant domestic workers<sup>37</sup> who they centre as the focal point of the study (5). Contact to informants was established via private contacts as well as through other active migrant organizations. Even though majority-Austrians were conducting the interviews with domestic workers, a factor that raises the issue of social hierarchies in the research process (41), the context of the study was that of direct sponsorship by MAIZ. Additionally, information and account of the aim of the study took place at the start of each interview.

Since the primary focus of my empirical research was on the members of the outsourcing households, it goes without saying that the studies from Haidinger and MAIZ I am drawing on reach deeper than anything I could have gathered within the scope of this research in the few months I had in the field. Since *how* we come to know shapes *what* we know (Ekinsmyth 2001, 179), I am aware though that to enter relationships with migrant domestic workers as part of this study would have affected me differently, and changed the research process, interpretation, and writing. The disparity between the different living worlds of outsourcing couples and domestic workers was brought home to me by the two "failed" interviews with Anelia and Fidan. The tiny size of Anelia's apartment, as well as its location right next to a busy road, contrasted starkly with the

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<sup>37</sup> The interviewed workers come from Ghana, Ecuador, Poland, Brazil, Moldova, Turkey, Slovakia, Iran, Hungary, Croatia and Peru (MAIZ 2004, 42-43).

bright and spacious homes I had visited the outsourcing couples in, and made the different positions of the actors visceral and immediately tangible for me.

Finally, I had to come to terms with the fact that, with the resources I had and with the time constraints on the completion of the thesis, I just was not able to establish relationships with domestic workers. Since the focus of my research was on the men in the outsourcing households, however, my research is still valuable, even though less extensive than originally planned.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I intend to follow up these missing threads in my post-doctoral research.





## Part II

### Social Relations in Domestic Spaces



# 3

## Identity, Constructions of Gender and Masculinities

### **From Independent to Relational Selves**

[T]he conceptions of society in the literature too often presuppose a degree of consent and inclusion that does not exist outside the imagination of mainstream scholars – in a sense, a societal population essentially generated by simple iteration of that originally solitary Cartesian cognizer. As Linda Martín Alcoff has ironically observed, the “society” about which these philosophers are writing often seems to be composed exclusively of white males (Alcoff 1996, 2, n.1), so that one wonders how it reproduces itself (Mills 2007, 15).

The above quote from Charles Mills, paraphrasing Alcoff, points towards the fact that the independent, supposedly self-sufficient human individual that came to be the dominant concept in the West is a culturally specific myth of modernity. In what follows, I will first point to the omissions in the formation of this notion: I will draw on Mills, Carole Pateman, and Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon to highlight the significant cracks in the foundations of the dominant concept.

The critique of the autonomous view of the subject sustained by the Western modernity is important for my inquiry into the outsourcing of domestic labor in Austria as it provides a framework within which to scrutinize the relegation of domestic labor away from the register of one's own responsibilities. I argue that the unrealistic assumptions of self-sufficiency mask interdependencies with others by ignoring existing relations that help sustain corporeal/emotional/mental/cognitive aspects of our human selves. In short, I claim that the image of the autonomous, modern self, distorts a more realistic portrayal of our daily lives, in which we are dependent on a host of others. Being ignorant of connections of interdependence it becomes difficult for the modern subject to sustain responsible relationships – e.g. towards marginalized migrant workers.

It is vital to me to move beyond the mere takedown of the non-useful term of the autonomous self. Thus, I claim that after the illuminative critique of the independent individual, it is significant to become responsive to the richness of existing alternative concepts. In this second step, I will elaborate on alternative traditions – mostly from the field of feminist care ethics – to draw attention to notions of the human individual as relational and interdependent. Finally, I will read a relational concept of the human enriched with energetics; that is: through an affect theory lens that I will connect to an epistemology of connection in Chapter 4.

One of the main assumptions on which my work is based is a view of humans as necessarily social beings, intricately connected through webs of interdependencies. There are many traditions, past and present, which are quite diverse in their concrete formulations of this relationality, and all start from an ontology of connection. Some speak to interrelations among humans, while others also perceive energetic connections between the human and the nonhuman world. Although an understanding of connection is present in numerous and different traditions and is intuitive to many people, it is divorced

from what came to be the dominant Western notion of the self in modernity. Thus, I will have to explain what I am talking about exactly when referring to this “Western tradition” and contrast it with what I think would be more suitable concepts of connected/relational selves. Arguing that responsibility emerges out of being responsive to our connections, I utilize this discussion of the human subject as relational individual to shed light on the emergence of practices of responsibility and irresponsibility in the domestic realm. I claim that the dominant notion of the independent subject that ignores relationality underpins non-responsive practices and thus severs social bonds. Focusing on the needs of domestic work-outsourcing households, while being less attentive towards those who provide these services is to disrespect human interconnectedness. Disregarding the interdependencies between individuals in specific, asymmetrical ways – as I will argue in detail in Chapter 4 and 5 – fortifies the reproduction of structural injustice within the organization of domestic labor.

To many it may seem odd to explain that we are connected to others around us, since from our conception we are beings that only come into existence through joint efforts of other human beings, are nurtured and develop within others, are born through their bodies, and continue to depend on human and nonhuman others throughout our lives. For the first years of our lives, the fact that we are connected to and depend on others is considered obvious; the same applies to the years of old age. The dominant narrative though suggests that being “in need” of connection is the exception, rather than the norm. In other words: that there are certain phases, or special circumstances, in which humans divert from an independent, autonomous, self-sufficient “norm;” and that these special cases include the beginning and end of our lives; periods of illness; “physical, intellectual, psychological or sensory impairment, or [...] a socially constituted condition of

disability” (Hanlon 2012, 35, citations omitted) that in the case of people living with disabilities can mean being excluded from this “healthy/autonomous norm” altogether.

As feminist care ethics have emphasized it is rather the other way around: being dependent and interdependent is the ordinary human condition, not the exception. Even those individuals, who claim to be independent, are dependent in many aspects of their lives. Still, they are *not perceived* as such. Cynthia Willett frames this quite peculiar fact as follows:

The modern liberal subject is dependent upon a host of caregivers, low-wage and often disenfranchised workers, and social institutions to prop up the private domain of his or her self-determination. Exploited service workers seem to be well within the view of the wealthy middle-class subject, and yet the subject who prizes his or her autonomy acts as though s/he does not see them. No doubt, the liberal ideology of autonomy trains those who dwell at the centers of power *not to register* certain facts (Willett 2001, 174, italics added).

In agreement with Willett, I claim that it is our lack of responsiveness to actual dependencies and interdependencies that keeps the myth of independence alive. As I will elaborate below, it is this non-accidental structural blindness or negligence, or *epistemic ignorance*, towards people and societal structures that we are connected to, that are at work in the outsourcing of reproductive labor to migrant “others.”

I argue that the concept of the isolated, supposedly self-sufficient, independent individual is a hallucinatory image of omnipotence – to speak in Teresa Brennan’s (2000) terms – that is divorced from its factual context; it is a narrative that is dependent on a very real non-responsiveness and ignorance towards existing dependencies. What is more, following Brennan’s point that a hallucination is not immaterial in its effects (2000, 67), practices of non-responsiveness and ignorance may slowly transform us into something

that is – in a bad way – closer to this illusionary ideal. Along with the failed responsibilities for those with whom we are connected to, we can *become* isolated individuals slowly losing our rootedness in those webs of connections that also give us meaning and identity.

Before drawing on alternative conceptions of the individual, from the feminist care ethics tradition, I would like to emphasize how theories that assume the independence of the subject rely on strategic exclusions and disguise existing relationships. In the following passage I will discuss Carol Pateman's (2008) and Charles Mills' (2008) critiques of contract theory as well as Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon's (1994) analysis of how the notion of the abstract "neutral" individual came to be associated with independence in the industrial era. Each of these theorists argues that the ideal of the independent individual has from the very beginning relied on strategic omissions. I argue that we have to be responsive to our interconnectedness in order to establish relations of responsibility.

### *Independent, Autonomous Selves*

Pateman (2008) argues that the individual in contract theory is importantly male. According to Pateman, the original contract contained two parts: the social contract established among these same-sexed (male) individuals; and the sexual contract, which implied the subjection of women to men. Only the former part of the contract is deemed worthy of political discussion, whereas the latter part is ignored. Pateman emphasizes that dominant readings of the original contract regard it as a story of freedom, and leave out the other half of the story, that is men's domination over women and the right of men to enjoy equal access to women. The contract, for Pateman, is far from being opposed to patriarchy; rather it is the means through which modern "fraternal patriarchy" in which

women are subordinated to men “as men,” is established (2008, 336). The formal inclusion of women in contemporary contract theory does not change the underlying assumptions and does not render the category of the individual gender-neutral. Pateman’s analysis thus points to important inbuilt exclusions in the concept of the naturally free and equal (male) individual.

Building on Pateman’s critique, Mills (2008) adds that the male individual established through contract theory is essentially white. Or to be more precise: he is *made white* through the creation of the contract. As, according to Mills, the racial contract does not only establish racial exploitation but creates “*race itself* as a group identity” (Mills 2008, 356, italics in original). Mills asserts, that in the early stages of the racial contract, the period of “de jure white supremacy” – that is “the epoch of the European conquest, African slavery, and European colonialism, overt white racial self-identification, and the largely undisputed hegemony of racist theories” (361) –, white supremacy was quite transparent (362). Through the subsequent formal extension of rights to everybody the racial contract has been disguised but has in no way been annulled. From a global perspective – and this point will be central to any contemporary discussion of paid domestic service – the racial contract “effects a final paradoxical norming and racing of space” that results in a distorted picture in which “raced spaces appear as conceptually and historically irrelevant to European and Euro-world development” (362). Through the denial of essential connections to other places Europe and its inhabitants appear as peculiarly rational and industrious, “differently endowed with qualities that have enabled them to dominate the world” (362). This reading, in turn, ignores the web of existing spatial connections that made this development of the “European miracle” (362) possible.

The contractarians Pateman and Mills discuss (Hobbes, Locke, Kant, and Rousseau) were all white and male; and they did not *perceive* what for others now are yawning gaps.



Understanding epistemic ignorance – as a specific form of knowing – as related to social location (Alcoff 2007; cf. Code 1993 on the situatedness of the supposedly “neutral” knower, especially pp. 22-23; on standpoint epistemologies cf. Collins 1991; and Harding 1993), I suggest we read these omissions as related to the authors’ privileged positions within their specific cultural, historical, and political context. In a euphemistic reading, we can, at least, say that their specific standpoints did not privilege them to register that their general theories did generally not include the experience of a whole lot of people. And in a more realist reading – that brings us back to Mills’ analysis of the contractarians – we can expand that these are not innocent omissions, but constitutive exclusions. The early contractarians’ theories, including the ideal of equality among humans, were founded on what Mills calls the racial contract, by which the human was constituted through explicit opposition to the nonhuman savage. The relation between responsiveness and epistemic ignorance that I gesture at here will be in focus in Chapters 4 and 5.

I discuss Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon’s critique in more detail, as it also directs attention to how our perceptions of dependency and independence link to the definition of the concept of work (and of domestic work as “nonwork”). In their article, *A Genealogy of Dependency*, Fraser and Gordon (1994) analyze the historical shift in the construction of the notion of “dependency:” from a fairly neutral term in its preindustrial usage, it came to signify a specifically gendered, classed and racialized condition, epitomised in the U.S. context by the stereotype of the black, unmarried teenage mother receiving welfare payments. Previously a neutral term describing the “norm,” dependency thus became a highly stigmatized notion that is today perceived as deviant and contrasted with the new ideal of “*independence*.”

In their examination, Fraser and Gordon show that this framing veils actual dependencies. They assert that in its patriarchal preindustrial usage dependency described

the broader condition of most people. Although the notion always implied a certain state of subordination, this very fact was a central feature of the experience of the norm, and a situation that women shared with men.

Furthermore, before the eighteenth century the term was not likely to be used to describe individuals at all, and in the seventeenth century was rather applied to aggregate entities, such as nations, or church congregations (Fraser/Gordon 1994, 313). Besides the individualization the term underwent, dependency was gradually being problematized. Fraser and Gordon show closely how the notion of dependency slowly transformed and arrived at its contemporary “modern, industrial, male-supremacist usage” (312).

One essential marker for dependency in the pre-industrial context was waged labor; independence back then meant to be free from the need to work for someone else and was perceived as an unusual privilege, as superiority. In the industrial period in the context of social movements towards more equality and individual rights, independence became associated with waged labor, and the male, white worker earning enough money to sustain his dependent family eventually became the personification of the independent individual. The figures of the pauper, the native and slave and the housewife were the negatives by which the individual was contrasted (316). Since that point in history, capital-labor relations were by definition exempt from relations of subordination (319). Crucially this turn, describing “work” as a condition of “freedom,” also defines work as waged labor and renders reproductive work, predominantly performed by females in the private realm, as nonwork (329).

Before the rise of capitalism, according to Fraser and Gordon, all forms of work were “woven into a net of dependencies, which constituted a single, continuous fabric of social hierarchies” (331). Women were subordinated, and their labor often controlled by others, but at the same time, their work was visible and valued. The combination of religious and

secular individualism and industrial capitalism led to the emergence of the new dichotomy between economic dependency and economic independence (332). Combined with the hegemony of waged labor, this dichotomy resulted in the occlusion and devaluation of feminine connoted unpaid reproductive work.

What I want to illuminate via Fraser and Gordon's work is this illustration of how the ideal of the independent individual depends on a tactical *non-responsiveness*. The (white, male) independent individual is constituted through a denial of ordinary relations of multifaceted dependencies. In other words, the independent individual relies on being ignorant of our inextricably intertwined webs of interdependencies.

I want to highlight another string of this individualisation process besides what Fraser and Gordon explore focussing on the concept of dependency. It is this the movement of extricating the human self out of a web of affective, energetic relations with its human *and* nonhuman surroundings. Via this process of separating what is "in-" from what is "outside" a human person previously often fluid boundaries of the self or more continuous affective perceptions became more and more rigid and clear-cut. I will come back to the question of permeability in Chapter 4, and in Chapter 5.

(Feminist) anthropologists have long emphasized the specificity of the "bounded" self (cf. Scheper-Hughes/Lock 1987; Marriott 1976; Strathern 1988; Moore 1994). McKim Marriott (1976) introduces the concept of the *dividual* – that is later taken up by Marilyn Strathern (1988) – to grasp the notion of agents who are understood to have permeable and changing "boundaries." Dividual persons are differentiated "in" themselves, made of partible bits that are only unified through social interaction (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994, 41). In importing Eurocentric perspectives into the study of colonial others, "Strathern argues that a corollary of the historical ambition of anthropologists to study bounded

communities is their focus on the bounded person” (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994, 40; cf. Moore 1994, 33).

The modern Western concept of the *individual* (non-partible) self that is perceived as “naturally” placed *in* the body, as a kind of pre-cultural given – Setha Low references Schepher-Hughes and Lock (1987) – and the perceived boundary between the body/self and the rest of the world, is itself culturally and historically specific (Low 2003, 10-11).

Low asserts that:

[t]he space occupied by the body, and the perception and experience of that space, contracts and expands in relationship to a person’s emotions and state of mind, sense of self, social relations, and cultural predispositions (Low 2003, 10).

Allison Weir’s reading of freedom as the capacity to be in relationships of one’s choosing is inspired by the work of Patricia Hill Collins and Cynthia Willett who invoke the “love and justice tradition of Black America.” Weir gives the following example from Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), “I was big [...] and deep and wide and when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was *that* wide” (Morrison 1987, quoted in Weir 2013, 57). Seth, an ex-slave, who is the speaker in the quoted passage, expresses an expansion of herself in corporeal terms. This illustrates that what one perceives as “connected to” me – and what one perceives “as me” – can mean very different things within the human world. Understandings of self can go far beyond the space of the individual body of a human person and become “big” selves. They can stretch deep into the past through ancestors and extend wide in our living relatives, as in Aboriginal cultures of the continent now known as Australia. And, they can importantly include the nonhuman. Within the scope of my thesis, I will only gesture at alternative understandings of such big selves.

In line with masculinity studies' conception of masculinities, the notion of individuals that I will be working with is one that "presupposes a belief in individual difference and personal agency" (Connell 1995, 68), and is anchored in the modern West. Yet, it will be a conception that, in contrast to the dominant notion, is starting from a strong relational focus. Hence, what is important to me here, are not so much concepts of big selves, but the question of connectedness in modern Western conceptions. And I want to complicate this point. I am specifically interested in the connections between the members of the households I interviewed in Vienna who pay for domestic cleaning, as well as the relationships between them and their domestic workers. I argue that in order to get a better sense of these relations between human beings, the transmission of affects is relevant: as it is affects that importantly shape these encounters.

According to Teresa Brennan (2000), the idea that there are energetic connections between human actors and their surrounding environment was common sense before the seventeenth century – even in the West. Brennan ties subject/object thinking to the rise of an interior consciousness (2000, 10), which – as it progressively gained momentum – made it harder to perceive of the relations in the in-between.

Premoderns conceived of themselves as energetically and psychically connected with their environment and others in it. Subject/object thought automatically separates the subject from the environment [...] A psyche that thinks in subject/object terms denies its connections with 'objects'. The subject is precisely other than the object (Brennan 2000, 10).

I will get back to this strong subject/object split in Chapter 4 when I discuss Collins' critique of dichotomous, *either/or* thinking, what she calls an epistemology of separation. Collins puts forward an epistemology of connection starting from a *both/and* approach she perceives as grounded in Black feminist thought.

Before that, let me draw on alternative, relational, notions of the individual from feminist scholars and link them to the construction of gender in general and masculinities in particular.

### *Interdependent, Relational Selves*

The analyses of modern conceptions of independence and dependency, as well as the development of the ideal of interdependence, have been central to contemporary feminist theory. In the last section, I have highlighted that the construction of the independent and isolated, supposedly self-sufficient individual is a historically and culturally specific, masculinist construction.

Feminist care ethics are, in contrast to what can be called a justice view on morality (Gilligan 1982), not based on universal standards, but focus on an (embodied) *response* instead. Fiona Robinson (2013) emphasizes that care ethics do not take a principled theory to compel us to resume our responsibilities and care for distant others. She suggests that such a project can be found in the liberal discourse of humanitarianism, in which “benevolent, autonomous” individuals in the global North are called upon “to keep peace, build security and ‘develop’ the dependent, impoverished global south” (Robinson 2013, 133). Care ethics, in contrast, “is built on fundamentally different normative and ontological assumptions about the nature of injustice and the moral subject” (135), and focuses “on the capacity of people to fulfil their day-to-day responsibilities to particular others” (133). This relational and interactional perspective differs radically from the liberal distributive tradition, as care ethics “focuses attention on the different forms of power that construct relations of dependence, uphold the myth of ‘autonomous man’ and conceal our needs and responsibilities for care” (133). I understand responsibility as a practice that involves our everyday responsiveness to our interconnectedness. This

conceptualisation that does not require – Kantian – obedience to some higher abstract ideal, is rooted in the feminist care ethics tradition.

In this section, I will weave together my relational approach to the human individual out of the richness of existing concepts of interdependence and relationality. Although I focus primarily on human interactions, my perspective does not assume humans as cut off from connections to the nonhuman world. What is more, using affect theory, I will elaborate on how we can only fully understand human-to-human relationships if we allow space for “the energetic and affective connections *between* an individual, other people and the surrounding environment” (Brennan 2000, 10, italics added). Being situated in a way that can neither be subsumed under the category mind nor clearly be placed in the body, Brennan claims that affects hold the potential to disturb the “Cartesian”<sup>39</sup> split; they point to the bridge that never collapsed into the artificial gap between mind and matter. Or, to use Brennan’s words,

Energetic substance is manifest in anything from motion to the intermediate experience of affects: affects are especially important as a category in which some of the original indissolubility of thought and substance are retained; they keep the tie to matter, as emotions are indubitably corporeal, at the same time as they reflect ideational responses; we can regard them as the slower-motion residues of the original connection between thought and substance (Brennan 2000, 67).

In my conceptualization, I am using affects as a linking element between responsiveness and responsibility. Affects highlight the relevance of corporeality and at the same time point towards the inseparability of bodily aspects and the mind of the agent; and they go

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<sup>39</sup> Susan James claims that Descartes himself is “not guilty” of the clear-cut separation of body and mind that is traditionally attributed to him, but distinguishes “between passions and so-called intellectual emotions” (James 1997, quoted in Brennan 2000, 47).

beyond the individual self – as dispersed energies they are not restricted to intentional interactions between human actors.

I am working with Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez' conceptualization of affects that can “embrace an analysis of the dynamics of emotions,” yet “goes beyond the cognitive framework of emotions” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 13). While emotions are composed by meaning and transferred value and thus require a clear subject, affects are “unstructured and dispersed, they fluctuate in space, connecting different elements together” (13). Gutiérrez Rodríguez, who also works on the outsourcing of reproductive work, consequently takes emotional labor to address activities that are intentionally oriented towards caring for others. In her terminology affective labor goes beyond this definition; affects – in contrast to emotions – “do not require a subject as their addressee” (13), yet they move within an ontologically produced script that – above all – is directed towards the human. Affects carry meaning as they work through emotions and feelings, but “are diffuse and unstructured (re-)actions, immediate *bodily reactions* to energies, sensations and intensities that are not always clearly located *in* a person, but dispersed in space” (14, italics added). They can disturb, but also stretch and reaffirm power relations (5). Gutiérrez Rodríguez asserts that the encounters between Latin American “undocumented migrant” domestic workers and their West European employers in her study are shaped by “the transmission of affects, that is, affection, as affects *evolve in the extension to other bodies*” (6, italics added). About my overall emphasis on bodies as well as interconnectedness, I want to stress that first in this conception of affects human corporeality plays a foundational role; and second it is a relational concept. “While emotions address the cognitive level of personal feelings, affects engage with often ‘unspecified’ energies, linked to our relational and social character as human beings” (14).



In their quality of being unintentional (re-)actions, these energies affect the ongoing shaping of relations. Affects originate in specific historical and geopolitical context, and also come to carry “residues of meaning. They are haunted by past intensities, not always spelled out and conceived in the present” (5). Again, this points to the larger structures within which individual interactions take place. The link to responsiveness and responsibility will become clearer in my discussions of permeability and epistemic ignorance (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

Jennifer Nedelsky perceives the relational self to be constituted within, yet not determined by<sup>40</sup> (Nedelsky 2011, 31-32) *nested relations*. These relations always include personal as well as wider relational patterns (e.g. gender relations) that intersect with institutions, laws of a nation-state, or market economy, which, in turn, interact with the global level of markets and institutions (20).

In contrast to other feminist theorists, Nedelsky argues in favour of holding on to a concept of autonomy. She does so partly because the idea of autonomy is a very powerful concept – with a “kind of iconic value” (42) within the Anglo-American culture within which she is writing – and, I would argue, in most places of the global North today. Nedelsky sees the positive dimension of the Western attachment to autonomy as connected to the “capacity of creative interaction” (47-49). She further argues that, besides autonomy, these interactions require capacities to attend, receive and respond to what we are interacting with, as well as “the possibility of *new* engagement” (47). This

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<sup>40</sup> I find Nedelsky’s argument to be compatible with the feminist standpoint epistemologies that I am drawing on. Sandra Harding writes: “the fact that subjects of knowledge are embodied and socially located has the consequence that they are not fundamentally different from objects of knowledge. We should assume causal symmetry in the sense that the same kinds of social forces that shape objects of knowledge also shape (but not determine) knowers and their scientific projects” (1993, 64).

crucial – and, she asserts, equally ordinary – capacity to (ap-)perceive something new,<sup>41</sup> is required to leave the old and find a new path, to extricate oneself out of relationships that are not constructive. Nedelsky seeks to safeguard the positive content of autonomy from the liberal tradition to which “we cannot afford to cede the meaning of autonomy to” (44) and consequently claims, “we should redefine rather than resist the term” (ibid.). Nedelsky introduces her redefinition of autonomy as “relational autonomy.”<sup>42</sup> An oxymoron to some, the concept is born out of a rigorous thinking through of the relational self that is taken seriously in being dependent, embodied, and affective (33). Nedelsky values Carol Gilligan’s work that introduced the term “ethics of care.” Gilligan described a form of moral reasoning that starts with the “particular rather than the abstract principle and attends to context and to relationships in particular” (87) as genuine reasoning. However, Nedelsky does not see her own work as generating moral theory. She is interested in “the role of relationship, institutional as well as personal, in enabling core values” (ibid.) – such as autonomy. The “idea of unique and immensurable value of each individual remains helpful” (88) for Nedelsky as a necessary part of her relational approach; it is because this uniqueness matters to her that she proposes a relational approach that can – in contrast to an exclusive focus on the individual – capture one’s distinct location as “a relational articulation of individual uniqueness” (88-89).

Importantly, Nedelsky’s relational focus does not necessarily aim at maintaining existing relationships at all costs; that is to say: when they are detrimental to one’s well-

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<sup>41</sup> Nedelsky refers to both Hannah Arendt’s concept of natality as well as D.W. Winnicott’s term “creative apperception” in this passage (47).

<sup>42</sup> Within feminist anthropology, Eleanor Leacock has highlighted different understandings of autonomy to the dominant Western notion. In her 1954 research with the Montagnais-Naskapi of Labrador, Leacock found that women – just as men – in this egalitarian society before colonisation had substantial power to make decisions regarding their life and their activities. Individual initiative and agency as well as the capacity to be sensitive towards the feelings of the other members of the community were significant in this society in which decision-making processes were consensus based (Leacock 1989, 36). Leacock claims that the importance of these elements has to be seen in connection to the degree of interdependence of the group as a whole (ibid.). Even though Leacock did not call this kind of autonomy “relational,” it is a relational formulation of individual autonomy grounded in interconnectedness.

being. Nedelsky does not perceive relationships as such as benign (32). Her relational approach is geared towards understanding “what kinds of relationships foster – and which undermine – core values, such as autonomy, dignity, or security” (32). It is thus always evaluative and aimed at transformation. “Part of the reason relational autonomy is so important is that it is part of what enables people to extricate themselves from bad relationships as well as to transform the structures that shape those relationships” (32).

And, again in Nedelsky’s words,

One of the contributions of feminism to relational theory is that it is particularly unlikely to make the mistake of romanticizing community or relationship. Feminists know all too well the destructive power of bad relationships – such as the gendered division of caring labor (32).

In a similar vein that highlights *both* the important character of relationships as attachment sites *and* their embeddedness within (unequal) relations of power, Allison Weir reconceptualises identity as connectedness, as “being held together” (2008a; 2013).

The next section shall serve two main purposes. Firstly, drawing on Weir, I will explore how I take connection and *identification with* to be essential for identity; and secondly, I elaborate my understanding of masculinities, as gender identities. Both of these aspects are necessary for my understanding of the importance of men as embodied agents in the outsourcing of domestic work from private households.

### **Masculinities as Gendered Identities**

Concepts like autonomy and agency have become essential markers of adult/mature individuals in the West, the dominant view of human autonomy being one of “self-determination of individual rational agents” (Urban 2014). The rise of capitalism propelled the liberal version of autonomy as grounded in private property and competitive

selves that feminist theorists have argued against with conceptions of relational selves (Weir 2013, 56). By drawing on Nedelsky's relational autonomy and thus using an alternative to the dominant notion, I also aim to highlight that central concepts – such as autonomy – are not as monolithic as we often take them to be. The dominant notion only gains stability through ongoing reiteration in the first place. Socially constructed concepts – like autonomy as self-determination, grounded in separation – are likely to be culturally specific and, what is more, gendered.

Socializing boys and girls into different modes of engaging with other human beings has consequences. If the boy learns, through embodied practices, words, and affective relations, that it is ok – in accordance with the general rules – to do his thing, whereas the girl learns that it is also important to check in if others are okay (with her behavior) a difference is introduced. Consequently, we will end up with two sets of ideals, and – to take cue from bell hooks – people who are restricted in their freedom to realize themselves as fully human (hooks 2000; 2004). If we then introduce standards to measure moral maturity that prioritize and value the behavior that some and not others are encouraged to show, the results will be gender biased. This inherent androcentrism is what Carol Gilligan (1982) criticized about her teacher Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development, in contrast to which she developed her moral theory. The boys in Lawrence's study, who according to Gilligan tended to follow a *justice* ideal that the model was based on consequently ranked higher on its scale than girls who tended to support a *care* perspective in which relationships with other people were given more weight in the process of moral reasoning.

Gilligan's work has been criticized as essentialist, homogenizing differences in promoting the notion of a generic woman by relying on a white, middle-class sample (Collins 1991, 8); other critiques target the circularity of the argument as well as the

oppositional setup of separation versus connection (Weir 1996). The association of *the* subject (that is masculine connoted) with separation that Gilligan highlights, however, is important to bear in mind. It is of particular relevance since an important part of my project is, generally, to emphasize an understanding of individuals as relational selves and, specifically, to highlight men's embodied practices through an angle of interdependence and relationality. I will get back to this point at the end of this section on masculinities as gendered identities, in which I will put forward a nuanced understanding of masculinities as multiple, importantly embodied and embedded within relations of power.

The concepts of gender, as well as identity, are both heavily used in academic discourses and beyond, resulting in ways of use that can be muddled and vague on the one hand, or too static and fixed on the other. Both concepts – in their diverse range of forms – have attracted a considerable amount of critique. Despite the specific critiques, both gender and identity are often used as if they were self-explanatory. It thus seems helpful to me to clarify how I understand gender and identity respectively within the scope of this thesis. I will do so while concretizing the main premises from the field of study of men and masculinities with which I am working.

### *Sex/Gender (and the Body)*

Let me start with the analytical differentiation between sex and gender and critiques of the naturalization of both. Beginning in the early 1970s feminist anthropologists, along with scholars from other disciplines, started to make a distinction between the socially constructed gender and biological-anatomical facts of sex (cf. Rubin 1975). This made it possible to analyze gender as a system of symbols and meanings being shaped by and

shaping cultural practices and experiences (Yanagisako 1997, 37). Yet, the split into sex and gender was soon criticized on the grounds that it tended to naturalize sex. Sex, however, is not universally filled with the same content. The functions and components of the human body are associated with imports that lead to diverse meanings and interpretations in different societies (cf. Strasser/Schein 1997). Biological factors are transformed into categories of meaning that receive their concrete shape in interaction with other social categories (Hastrup 1978, quoted in Strasser/Schein 1997, 11). Hastrup argues that the relationship between biological factors and cultural interpretation is a two-way process. Raewyn Connell (1995), luminary in the field of critical masculinity studies, makes an analogous point in referring to Alice Rossi. Even though gender was never supposed to be determined by sex, in the analytic division sex in a way ended up as the basis for the cultural superstructure of gender (cf. Rossi 1985, quoted in Connell 1995, 51-52). Sylvia Yanagisako and Jane Collier highlight this analytical flaw that for them is grounded in Eurocentrism. They assert that male and female are not “natural” categories (Yanagisako/Collier 1987, 15). What is more, the conceptualization of two exclusive sexes, originating in biological reproductive functions and corresponding with binary gender are a Western folk model, and must not be seen as an a priori universal reality (Strasser/Schein 1997, 12). Yanagisako and Collier assert that:

Although we do not deny that biological differences exist between men and women (just as they do among men and among women), our analytic strategy is to question whether these differences are the universal basis for the cultural categories “male” and “female”. In other words, we argue against the notion that cross-cultural variations in gender categories and inequalities are merely diverse elaborations and extensions of the same natural fact [of biological reproduction] (Yanagisako/Collier 1987, 15).

Feminist anthropologists have highlighted time and again that both the sexed body as well as the gendered individual are culturally constructed (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994). I believe it is essential to consider critiques from the field of feminist anthropology that have altered anthropology as a discipline and had an impact on feminist theory. As a researcher located in the West<sup>43</sup>, I am moving within a space in which the dominant alignment of sex and gender à la male/men and female/women is propagated. I want to underline that the negligence to complicate the naturalization of sex, as well as the relationship between sex and gender (what Yanagisako and Collier identify as Eurocentrism) can be seen as a failure to *perceive* alternative readings, which is structurally buffered by the association of European/American worldviews with power. One of the tools anthropology as a comparative discipline can provide to social sciences more broadly is to illuminate – through a change of perspectives – that social phenomena are not as “natural” as they seem to be. Becoming responsive to how one’s situatedness inevitably produces blind spots and seeing the familiar in its oddness can help to detect processes of naturalization in taken-for-granted social features.

Influenced by feminist anthropology and critical social theory, critical masculinity studies do not perceive masculinities as “natural,” as something static, that a person *has*, but as fluid and changing, context-dependent, something a person *does* within specific structural conditions. Masculinity is not bound to the social category of men; the trinity of male/men/masculinity does not necessarily coincide<sup>44</sup> and should not be collapsed. Cornwall and Lindisfarne suggest, that the conflation of male/men/masculinity respectively female/women/femininity in Western constructions of difference should be

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<sup>43</sup> My personal journey brought me across half of the planet from Austria to Australia and interestingly enough I am still in the “West.”

<sup>44</sup> On masculine presenting women cf. Jack\_Judith Halberstam’s book *Female Masculinity* (1998).

interrogated and documented, rather than assumed (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994, 9-10).

They suggest

that the three terms do not necessarily overlap and that each term of the two triads has multiple referents which blur, qualify, and create the possibility of ambiguous interpretations in any particular setting. Thus notions of maleness, designations of manhood and attributions of masculinity have no essential referent, nor even a finite range of referents. Rather, each of the three terms can be used to describe a wide variety of different and even flatly contradictory aspects of human bodies and human behavior (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994, 10).

The claim that there is no determinism for masculinity grounded in biology should not be confused with the irrelevance of bodies. To the contrary, Connell points out that the “body inescapable” (1995, 52-56) is highly relevant in the configuration of the social practice of gender (1995, 43-66). “Bodies, in their own right as bodies, do matter” (1995, 51). She rejects the three ideas of, first, the body as “natural machine,” producing gender difference (e.g. “real men”), second, the socially deterministic image of the body as “neutral” landscape on which social symbolism is imprinted, and third, a combination of both biological and social influence, that in their combination produce gender difference in behavior (1995, 45-46). Connell perceives men’s bodies as arenas: not fixing, yet important in the construction and expression of masculinity, which constantly involves bodily experience, bodily pleasure, and the vulnerabilities of bodies (2000, 218). Bodies should be understood as agents of and objects in social interaction at the same time (2002). As Connell and James Messerschmidt write:

Bodies are involved more actively, more intimately, and more intricately in social processes than theory has usually allowed. Bodies participate in social action by delineating courses of social conduct – the body is a



participant in generating social practice. It is important not only that masculinities be understood as embodied but also that the interweaving of embodiment and social context be addressed (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 851).

Again, bodies are neither the determining grounds of gender, nor to be abstracted from, but part of the interactional processes in which human beings construct gender identities.

### *Meaning Making Identities*

Feminist theorists have learned a lot, in the past couple of decades, about the dangers of binding identities. We have learned about parochialism, narrowness, xenophobia; about essentialism and ahistoricism; and about how careless and solipsistic conceptions of who we are can produce exclusion, and suffering, and blindness. We have learned, and continue to learn, crucial lessons about the dangers of collective identities and identity politics. But perhaps we have too often forgotten, or trivialized, or ironized the importance of being held together (Weir 2013, 62).

I base the further elaboration of my understanding of gender *identities* in Allison Weir's (2008, 2013) relational conceptualization of identity as a "historical, dialogical process of *meaning making*" (2013, 78). Weir differentiates between identity as category and identity as *connection to* and *identification with* ideals, each other and defining communities (3), with "subjective" identities interacting with "objective" identities as effects of relations of power. Highlighting both the important character of relationships as attachment sites, and their embeddedness within (unequal) relations of power, she reconceptualizes identity as connectedness, as "being held together," that can incorporate recognition of *both* relations of power *and* relations of identification (2013, 62-86; see also 45-61). Weir – in her work on solidarity – develops a concept of solidarity that is not

grounded in sameness, but starts from interconnectedness. In this endeavor Weir puts forward her model of *transformative identification*. What is borrow from this work for my project here is that identity, according to Weir's notion, is not atomist, not individualist, but emerging through relational processes of *meaning making*. I want to combine this conceptualization of identity, as being held together through *identification with* with the strand of work from masculinity studies in which, as I have stated above, masculinities and femininities are understood as essentially relational concepts. Let me emphasize that I understand relationality here to mean more than what Weir calls a thin interpretation of "positionality:" a reduction of "women's identity to a simple matter of category, defined through opposition to another category" (66). Even though in the Western binary masculinities and femininities receive meaning from excluding their counterparts, gender identities are relational beyond this oppositional sense: they are made, remade and transformed in social interaction. I would argue that integrating Weir's conception of identity that includes an emphasis on identification to highlight the relational (individual and collective) processes of meaning making can further a nuanced approach to masculinities as gender identities. Combining Weir with masculinity studies, we can say that constructions of masculinities can be understood as relational processes of meaning making. Processes that are importantly embedded within power relations, which is illustrated by the following quote from Connell:

Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition. This holds regardless of the changing content of the demarcation in different societies and periods of history. Masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation. To put it another and perhaps clearer way, it is *gender relations* that constitute a coherent object of knowledge for science. Knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of knowing gender relations. [...] masculinities are

configurations of practice structured by gender relations. They are inherently historical; and their making and remaking is a political process affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change (Connell 1995, 44, *italics in original*).

Again, I want to add Weir's conceptualization to these claims from Connell. As Weir frames it, any "'objective' categorical identity, however essential or constructed, interacts with a 'subjective', interest-driven, identification-based relational identity, such that what we have in common is in part a product of our interested interpretations and affective commitments" (Weir 2013, 68-69). Weir's non-categorical conception of identity that is not grounded in sameness is "an ethical-relational and political model of identity, defined through relationships with other people and through identification with what is meaningful to us, with what we find significant" (69). Weir is grounding her alternative conceptualization of identity in the Hegelian-existentialist philosophical tradition in which identity is understood as a question of meaning. She establishes that "we form our identities through our relationships, commitments to and identifications with particular others and collective 'we's'" (69) that are significant to us. Identity as meaning is not about the "parameters" that can be used to describe us, but about our subjective feeling "of belonging, of connectedness, of being *held together*; by the values, ideas, commitments, attachments, and relationships that matter to us" (70, *italics in original*). Holding together in this sense, Weir points out, is neither about stasis nor mere repetition, but a continual re-creation: "the self has to be reconstructed and reenacted every day, through acts of self-making, and self-identification" (70). Yet, she emphasizes, identities are neither "simply given and objective," nor can they be "solely products of conscious or intentional choice" (72). It is rather the case that "we are engaged in a constant dialectic between the identities we find ourselves in and the identities we are creating" (72).

In the Hegelian tradition identity is perceived, first, as “constituted historically and relationally” (72). This fits hand in glove with the conception of gender identities within critical masculinity studies. As does the second premise: identity is “internally complex, differentiated, and conflictual” (72). I will get back to this second point below. Importantly, collectivities then are neither given categories, nor come to be merely out of “conscious or intentional choice” (72), but are rather “effects of history combining historically produced systems or structures with the interested participation of human agents” (72).

Having elaborated – with Weir – how I understand gender *identities* as central to meaning making I now turn again to the empirically based men and masculinities literature.

### *Multiple, Conflicting, Contradictory*

According to Connell and other masculinity scholars, masculinities and femininities are relational concepts exercised in configuring our worlds. It seems essential to me to highlight that it is not only men who make masculinities a social reality. Masculinities, just as femininities, emerge out of everyday social interactions that take place among people of all genders in interaction with other social categories, such as age, race, class and ability. People who identify as woman are actively engaged in the production of masculinities as well. I want to emphasize that this also means that the currently most dominant ideal to be a man, what Connell calls “hegemonic masculinity,” is born out of these relational processes between people (from face-to-face interactions to structural relations).

Because of the asymmetrical power structure of gender relations in patriarchal societies, in which women in general are subordinated to men, Connell finds that there is

no equivalent to hegemonic masculinity in femininities (1987, 183). In her early work, she consequently terms one form of femininity that “is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men” (183) as “emphasized femininity.” People living in patriarchal societies may tend to understand “emphasized femininity” in sexist ways, as “exaggerated” ways of presenting female. I thus want to clarify this point further and highlight that misogynist devaluation of women i.e. in the form of depreciation of speaking in high-pitched voices or wearing a lot of make-up et cetera is not what I take emphasized femininity to be about. Misogynist caricatures of women that are pervasive are part of the problem of patriarchal structures, hardly part of a dismantling analysis of patriarchy let alone providing new grounds on which to build on. Emphasized femininity, as I understand and use it, is not about form, but a specific, and often unconscious, function geared towards the perpetuation of patriarchal structures.

Furthermore emphasized femininity should not be understood in a manner that classifies people into static “types” – quite to the contrary. From the early formulations of the concept of hegemonic masculinity on psychoanalytic arguments about the “layered and contradictory character of personality, the everyday contestation in social life, and the mixture of strategies necessary in any attempt to sustain hegemony” (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 843; cf. Carrigan et al. 1985; Connell 1987) were considered. As in the Hegelian tradition in which identity is seen as “internally complex, differentiated, and conflictual” (Weir 2013, 72), critical masculinity studies hold that identities are multiple and conflicting (Hanlon 2012, 7; Connell 2000, 216), and men’s lives “often embody tensions between contradictory desires and practices” (Connell 2000, 219). I thus want to accentuate that it is productive to understand the notion of emphasized femininity to identify *actions/performances* that add to the stabilization and

continuance of patriarchy, rather than people. And that one and the same person can in one instance act in a way that is sustaining the patriarchal order and transgress or go beyond it in another. Consider the following example from my empirical material as an illustration of one such practice of emphasized femininity.

The passage, which comes from the joint interview I conducted with Alice and Jakob, also highlights the relational process the two of them are engaging in with me; they are negotiating not only their relationship to each other on the backdrop of the conversation with me and the questions I am posing; they engage in an interactional process of making sense of their (gendered) selves; they identify with values and ideas that go beyond themselves, and in so doing performatively shape and reproduce the larger structures. I shall briefly provide the concrete context of the excerpts below. In the course of the joint interview I asked Alice and Jakob, how they would organize parental leave if they were to have a child together. Alice and Jakob do not yet know very much about the different schemes<sup>45</sup> on offer and also tell me that they have actually not thought about how they would divide the parental leave between them. This means that in the interview situation they are simultaneously trying to figure this question out together and also negotiate their positions in this relationship. While Jakob asks me what the “normal” division in regards to this is (JI Alice/Jakob, ln 15; ln 23)<sup>46</sup>, Alice and Jakob soon both state that Alice would take more of the leave than Jakob.

Alice: Well, I don't know? Well, that I take parental leave for one and a half years, and then you do a little bit of parental leave. Maybe like that (JI Alice/Jakob, ln 21-22)?

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<sup>45</sup> The parental leave scheme in Austria provides different options parents can choose from: maximum 30 months for parent A and additional 6 months for parent B, 20 plus 4, 15 plus 3 or 12 plus 2.

<sup>46</sup> Interview types are abbreviated as follows: II for Individual Interview, JI for Joint Interview and GA for Go-along. Empirical material will be referenced in the following way: JI Alice/Jakob, ln 1-3 = Joint Interview with Alice and Jakob, lines 1-3.

When prompted if he could imagine taking parental leave as well, Jakob replies to me:

Jakob: Well, yeah, (slowly) yet it would probably be a little bit less, than for you (to Alice), because- well because of the form of my employment, and (Pause) I would have to work a bit during that time, see? (Pause) But, sure (JI Alice/Jakob 39-41).

Alice then goes on to propose that she would do the lion's share in the first phase, that is until the child is sent to public childcare; after that, she would want to go back to work fulltime. In that second phase, Alice elaborates, she would want Jakob to step in more because his job provides more opportunity for flexible scheduling than hers. Thus, in her vision, while she was at work the toddler would be cared for partly in public childcare and partly at home by Jakob.

Alice: I couldn't imagine going back to work after half a year- after I got a child. Me personally. Because I think that- Or because I would like to accompany the baby for longer than that. Or I – well, usually children get accepted at the kindergarten from the age of one and a half. Then they are looked after there, and everything before that, I – for me – think is too early. (Pause) That is- well, also a reason why I don't wanna do that.

I: Mhm. And you also would like to do that yourself (emphasized by speaker) until that point? Or if- let's say, Jakob would be at home more- (don't finish the sentence)?

Alice: Yes, I do think so.

I: Right.

Alice: Yeah.

I: Mhm.

Alice: Yeah, for about one and a half to two years I would, yes.

I: Mhm.

Alice: (turns to Jakob) *Or would you like to care for the baby- infant?*

Jakob: No, I think that would overstrain me a bit.

(Alice and Jakob both laugh)

Alice: Well, it will overstrain me as well, but still- (laughing)

Jakob: Well, if I were completely (emphasized by speaker) alone, that would totally overstrain me. Well, well (JI Alice/Jakob, ln 59-78, my emphasis).

To me, the passage includes both an instance of an act of emphasized femininity and reflects a broader struggle of contradictory interests within a person. Alice and Jakob are navigating larger cultural images that prescribe that it's the mother's duty to be a child's primary carer. In my reading, the part of the excerpt that I have highlighted – “Or would *you* like to care for the baby-infant?” – in which Alice naturalizes her role as (potential) mother, and that is meant to (consciously or unconsciously) unsettle Jakob's picture of himself as caring for his baby, is born out of the complexity of looking for what Alice feels can be the right place for her or both her and Jakob in this imaginary scenario within the larger structures they inhabit. On the one side, Alice establishes that she would want to work fulltime again after her (hypothetical) child is born, and also claims that to look after a baby “will overstrain [her] as well;” on the other side, she naturalizes childcare as a realm of maternal responsibility – at least in the early stages of the baby's life – from which Jakob is excluded. Hence, the passage nicely highlights how contradictory impulses can even be present in one situation. As expressions of emphasized femininity do, this latter move, of Jakob's exclusion, strengthens the patriarchal pattern and reinforces an unequal distribution of responsibilities for childcare. Articulations of emphasized femininity, as historically specific configurations of gender, do not just emerge *ex nihilo*, but also always unfold within a context, in social interaction in which they make sense to the actor.



*Differences Within and Between*

Critical masculinity studies build on critiques from women of color and feminist anthropologists, that have dismantled the construction of women as a category that homogenizes “differences within” (Moore 1993) a created group of people and disguises power imbalances (cf. hooks 1981; Davis 1981; Mohanty 1984). In their reformulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt call attention to the fact that it was women of color criticizing “the race bias that occurs when power is solely conceptualized in terms of sex difference [that laid] the groundwork for questioning any universalizing claims about the category of men” (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 831). Intersectional feminism – Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) first uses this term for the concept – highlights that gender is not always the most important, let alone only, social dimension of differentiation between people. An individual’s specific location within relations of power is shaped at the crossroads of intersecting axis of differentiation such as gender, class, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and religion. When Connell writes “[w]e cannot speak of ‘men’ as a single bloc with exactly the same interests” (Connell 2000, 219), it is with this in mind.

Fidelma Ashe (2004) notes that male experience tends to be portrayed as a monolithic construct, with men perceived as “damned” to reproduce patriarchal behaviour. This view also disguises that there are tensions “from within.” Connell and Messerschmidt remind us, that even men at the top of social hierarchies cannot be perceived as “winners” within a patriarchal system that permeates all genders: “Without treating privileged men as objects of pity, we should recognize that hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily translate into a satisfying experience of life” (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 852). This paints a picture of gender relations as changeable and changing that we should think of as a dynamic system. And it has important implications for transformation.

Connell emphasizes that no one is neutral to or outside of this arena of change “We are all engaged in constructing a world of gender relations” (Connell 1995, 86). And, – she continues – “[m]en no more than women are chained to the gender patterns they have inherited. Men too can make political choices for a new world of gender relations. Yet those choices are always made in concrete social circumstances, which limit what can be attempted; and the outcomes are not easily controlled” (86). Connell establishes that to perceive gender as a social pattern of practice means to understand it “as a product of history, and also as a *producer* of history” (81, italics in original). The process of change must be reflected in “any theory of masculinity worth having” (Connell 1995, 81). This reading of gender as historical and dynamic is supported by Weir’s work, and she importantly adds the dimension of identifications:

As individuals and as collectives we are engaged in a constant dialectic between the identities we find ourselves in and the identities we are creating. More than this, we find ourselves already in *identifications with* meanings, others, “we”s – identifications that are often unconscious, and in spite of intention, but whether chosen or not are intensely meaningful for us. And we develop and transform our identities through these kinds of identifications (Weir 2013, 72, italics in original).

Connell argues that in order to understand the historical process of gender, more than *a priori* theorizing, concrete study is required. The configurations of relationships that Connell identifies through empirical work as structuring the contemporary gender order in the West can be used as tools for further qualitative research.

The term “hegemonic masculinity”<sup>47</sup> is used to both signify a position within a network of power relations and to denote the relational concept encompassing multiple masculinities and power relations itself. Masculine gender identity as social practice emerges in interaction with race, class, nationality, sexual orientation and so forth. Connell emphasizes not to simplify the plurality of masculinities that comes to the fore through an intersectional angle by fixing the idea of multiple masculinities into character typology (Connell 1995, 76). Instead, she urges us to see the dynamic element and to examine the relations between men. This relational approach also makes visible the “hard compulsions under which gender configurations are formed” (76), and thus stresses not to confuse them with alternative lifestyles.

Connell identifies *hegemony*, *subordination*, *complicity* and *marginalization* (76-81) as “the practices and relations that construct the main patterns of masculinity in the current Western gender order” (77). The relations between multiple masculinities are often relations of hierarchy and exclusion, and generally have a hegemonic<sup>48</sup> form of masculinity at “the center of the system of gendered power” (Connell 2000, 216-217).

Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type that contains the same aspects everywhere and across time. To the contrary, it is a dynamic and changing variation of relations and a framework of orientation and reference for other masculinities; it is always contestable (Connell 1995, 76), and – indeed – contested. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity “as the configuration of gendered practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (77).

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<sup>47</sup> The first publications to propose the concept of hegemonic masculinity originate in Australia (Kessler et al. 1982; Connell 1982, 1983). Connell and Messerschmidt see *Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity*, by Carrigan et al. (1985), as the first article to systematize these beginnings, critiquing the “male sex role literature” (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 830).

<sup>48</sup> Connell takes the concept of hegemony from Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of class relations (Connell 1995, 77).

Hegemonic masculinity is not the most common form of masculinity, rather “[l]arge numbers of men and boys have a divided, tense or oppositional relationship to hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 2000, 217). And men who embody hegemonic masculinity strongly – such as actors or even film characters – are not necessarily very powerful people. I mentioned that hegemonic masculinity is hardly the statistical norm, yet it is normative, embodying “the currently most honored way of being a man” (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 832), to which all men are required to position themselves in relation to. In order to assert authority, the cultural ideal has to be met with corresponding institutional power at the top levels of business, the military and government (Connell 1995, 77).

Although violence often underpins authority, it is not direct violence, but the successful claim to authority that marks hegemony (77), and which is importantly backed by complicity from men and women. As the currently “accepted” strategy, it is very hard to image a form of hegemonic masculinity that relied on negatives such as violence, aggression or self-centeredness only; in order to be hegemonic, it must include positive elements such as providing financially for a family, having sexual relationships, or fatherhood (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 840-841).

Connell conceptualizes hegemony as relating to cultural dominance within society at large and calls the main hierarchical relations *between* groups of men subordination, complicity, and marginalization. The most important form of *subordination* between men is the dominance of heterosexual over homosexual men in contemporary European/American societies: from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, homosexuality is associated with femininity (Connell 1995, 78-79). While power relations pertaining to different sexual orientations were thus incorporated in these early formulations, the academic split between investigations pertaining mainly to gender *or*

sexualities meant that “queer/gay masculinity has played a minor role in helping to frame the ideas, concepts, and debates regarding the notion of (hegemonic) masculinity” (Rodriguez 2007, 108). Critical masculinity studies have thus been criticized for their “‘heterocentric orientation’ when it comes to the practices of discourse production about masculinity” (107).

*Complicity* is essential for the stabilization of hegemonic hetero-masculinity since the numbers of those embodying the normative ideal fully may be a diminishingly small minority (79). Still, the majority of men do have an investment in the reproduction of its hegemony. Connell introduces the term “patriarchal dividend” to name “the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women” (79). In being complicit with the hegemonic project, men can gain from it without being exposed to the “tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy” (79).

Whereas the relations of hegemony, subordination and complicity are internal to the gender order, *marginalization* designates the intersection of masculinities with structures such as class and race (80-81). Connell emphasizes not to take this point to be static either (e.g. as a-historic middle-class or working-class masculinities), since the reproduction and reshaping of identities in relation is always ongoing, with all structures being themselves in interdependent interplay. As dynamic practices of social interaction within changing relational patterns practices of marginalization or domination can consequently occur within, for example, subordinated masculinities as well.

### *Context, Locality and the Geographies of Masculinity*

Critical masculinity theory holds that people realize different aspects of femininity/masculinity, according to the specific context within which these gendered expressions take place. “[I]n particular social contexts, registrations of masculinity are

complex, multiple and contradictory. They are defined in interactive and rhetorical situations and vary over time and across social groupings” (Back 1994, 172).

This links back to the beginning of this section where I have referred to the feminist anthropologists Yanagisako and Collier (1987), who underscore that in order to grasp gendered identities locality is significant. Assuming that masculinities are fluid and situational, multifaceted, hierarchical and emerging out of social interaction, it becomes essential to consider the particular settings in which people understand gender identities (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994, 3).

While masculinity studies considered the context dependence of gender identities from the start (Carrigan et al. 1985; Connell 1995; Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994), Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasize in their re-formulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity that, since the phenomenon of globalization received growing attention within the past decades, it is crucial to be more nuanced in the consideration of different levels of locality (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 849-851). They suggest a simple three-level model of “geographies of masculinities” in which empirically existing hegemonic masculinities can be analyzed in local, regional, and global contexts (849). The local depicts constructions at the level of face-to-face interaction of families, organizations, and immediate communities, whereas the regional gathers representations at the level of the culture or nation-state. The global, finally, stands for masculinities constructed in transnational arenas such as world politics, transnational business or media flows (ibid).

In my project, I am interested in the links and mutual interdependence between the macro level on which “global care chains” (Hochschild 2002) come into effect and the intimate level of interactions between household members. My empirical material emerged on the level of face-to-face interactions; yet throughout the data I find references that show how the participants interact with larger surrounding structures. Firstly, on the

regional level, the Austrian nation-state importantly shapes “private” arrangements between my informants through laws and policies and is in turn shaped by its citizens. Secondly, if we look at the global level, the Austrian state itself is taking part in the negotiation of global social relations, in its capacity to engage actively in structuring (unequal) power relations. The focus on intimate settings of labor arrangements, and of familial interactions and communication, offers a unique optic onto these processes by capturing the way they play out at the level of subjective experience and meaning-making.

What interests me is how these different levels interact in the reproduction of patterns of (non)responsiveness and ignorance. This analysis is vital to move beyond the perpetuation of unequal structures and towards a transformative politics of reproductive work. I argue that common themes that produce both ignorance and responsibility run through all levels. Weaving in material from my empirical study in Vienna throughout this thesis, I will bring it together with relevant theoretical work. I claim that, through the interconnections and mutual construction of the three levels, specific patterns of practices that become large problems on a global scale, as well as such that can be deciphered as potentials for positive transformation can be found on the level of face-to-face interactions between individuals.

Connell and Messerschmidt also argue that there are important links between the three levels they define, which are not one-directional (e.g. the frequently assumed “top-down”) but rather multi-directionally interacting with each other. These links can be important in gender politics: “Global institutions pressure regional and local gender orders; while regional gender orders provide cultural materials adopted or reworked in global arenas and provide models of masculinity that may be important in local gender dynamics” (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 849). The “determining power” of the global is

thereby often overestimated, with existing research finding no proof that regional or local masculinities are “overwhelmed” by a powerful formation on the level of global arenas. “Yet,” Connell and Messerschmidt conclude, “the evidence on global dynamics in gender is growing, and it is clear that processes such as economic restructuring, [and] long-distance migration, [...] have the power to reshape local patterns of masculinity and femininity” (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005, 850).

Via my empirical material, I aim to make tangible, concrete spaces in which larger (global, and regional) structures interact in shaping the everyday encounters of my informants on the local level. And how, in turn, the collective actions of individual people can be read as reproducing structures of inequality *as well as* constituting openings, potentials for transformation on levels that go way beyond the level of individual households.

In the next chapter, *Responsiveness, affect, and permeability*, I will talk about the intersections of connectedness and power, and of unequally structured relations. I will start with examples from other feminist theorists, and then connect what I have said thus far with excerpts from my empirical material. This is to make tangible what concrete shapes inequality takes within the affective relations between my informants and domestic workers. In Chapter 5, the last chapter of Part II, I will continue to elaborate on how I perceive the unequal relations within the realm of reproductive work as connected to epistemic ignorance.



# 4

## Responsiveness, Affect, and Permeability

### **Responsive Relationality under Unequal Relations of Power**

Jennifer Nedelsky (2011), Allison Weir (2013), and Iris Marion Young (2005) frame relationships as constitutive but not as benign. Feminist – and for that matter, all – liberatory politics, aimed at transformation towards equality, must not be blind to either of those facts. Weir, in her discussion of *Home and Identity* (2013), argues that we should move beyond critiques and defences (of home) and together with that, away from the underlying dichotomies. Beyond the dichotomy of safety versus risk, we ought to imagine an alternative, as Weir writes:

I want to argue for an ideal of home as a site of the risk of connection, of sustaining relationship through conflict. Thus, rather than oscillating between the desire for a safe, secure, conflict-free home and the recognition that homes are in fact sites of violence and abuse, predicated on oppression and exclusion, we can recognize and affirm an ideal of home as a space of mutuality and conflict, of love and its risks and struggles, of caring and conflictual connections to others (2013, 49).

I will try to adopt an understanding of relational identities within this thesis that are constituted by “*both* relations of power *and* by relations of mutuality, flourishing, and love” (53, italics added). Through combining “the conscious assumption of the oppressions and violence that have shaped us with the affirmation of belonging, and the transformation of the future” (60), we “are engaging in a process of transformative identification: through reinterpreted preservation we transform ourselves, and hold ourselves together, through struggle, and without denying any of the suffering and tragedy this entails” (ibid.). Weir refers to Cynthia Willett’s reading of Frederick Douglass’ vision of freedom as a home not only “for those of his own kind” (Willett 2001, 202). “Douglass sought a home for the extended family of humankind. In this home the spirit will thrive” (ibid.). I wholeheartedly agree with Weir’s claim that it “is important to hold onto an ideal of a world in which *all of us* could have such homes” (Weir 2013, 61, italics added); this importantly includes people working as domestic workers in other people’s homes.

In Chapter 3, I have talked about relationality at length; I have also gestured towards the fact that relationships – both at the personal level and at the level of societal relational patterns are not as such good or constructive. Relationships are always embedded within relations of power (Cornwall/Lindisfarne 1994, 3). This latter point matters – especially in the case of reproductive labor. In what follows, I shall stress in more concrete terms how relationships are never neutral with respect to power. I will illuminate this with some examples that point towards the tie of responsiveness as a relational praxis of *situated knowers* (cf. Code 1993; Collins 1991; Harding 1991) and patterns of asymmetrical power relations. In Chapter 5, I will bring responsive relationality and epistemic

ignorance together to concretize further the contemporary challenges we face regarding ordinary responsibilities within the realm of the outsourcing of reproductive labor.

Responsiveness is one of the central shaping concepts of this thesis because I perceive it as a key element to understanding structural injustice in the domain of reproductive labor and its outsourcing; and as central to the emergence and perpetuation of irresponsible individual and collective practices. I understand responsiveness as a relational, embodied, interactive, and affective process. In being responsive, we open up towards our interconnectedness with human actors as well as the nonhuman. Besides connoting social processes of achieving certain levels of collective awareness, I suggest that responsiveness needs to be also considered within the register of unconscious responses. It is present on a corporeal level, in the “in-between” of our body-minds in affects, rather than in the rational psychic activity of the subject. I moreover argue that our capacities for responsiveness can grow and diminish. As a social practice or interaction responsiveness involves a learning process; it needs to be performed, practiced, to expand. This framing as a learning process might be misleading. I do not intend to imply that responsiveness is something “unnatural” that has to be acquired through socialization in the first place. Anyone who has ever observed a toddler closely will know that young children often show immense competence to be astounded and admire, to be open to perceive things that many adults see no longer. Many grown-ups have actively – though not necessarily consciously – unlearned this sense of being receptive. What I mean by “learning process” is that our capacities to be responsive need to be used, put into practice, to flourish and expand. My first claim in this section is thus that, as a social interaction of receiving and responding, responsiveness involves praxis. And as I have noted, our ability for responsiveness can augment as well as diminish.

Second, what we find easy to perceive will depend on the relations within which we are situated (cf. Alcoff/Potter 1993). Here, I connect the question of perception that is wedded to responsiveness, to insights from feminist epistemologies. As Lorraine Code puts it, “knowledge is a *construct* produced by cognitive agents within social practices” (1993, 15, italics in original). Feminist epistemologists have argued that the “neutral” observer, who populates mainstream epistemology, does not exist as such. As every human being is located “somewhere,” a supposed view from “nowhere” has to be scrutinized; if interrogated, many a “generalizable,” “objective” stance, will be found to originate in a particular, subjective perspective of a socially, and epistemically powerful group. In *Taking subjectivity into account* (1993), Code critiques dominant epistemologies in the form of “S-knows-that-p.” Code argues for “epistemologists to pay as much attention to the nature and situation – the location – of *S*” (20), the individual cognizer, as to the proposition *p*. Following feminist epistemologists, I maintain that our situatedness as knowers shapes our perceptual preferences (cf. Collins 1991; Harding 1991, 1993); I take this to apply to different levels, in line with Nedelsky’s notion of nested relations. As Nedelsky puts it, “every level is both shaped by and shapes those it intersects with. All human beings are both constituted by, and contribute to, changing or reinforcing the intersecting relationships of which they are part” (Nedelsky 2011, 22). If we zoom in on an individual within a given society, the position that she takes within the power relations of that society, that is: her distinct location at the crossroads of intersecting axis of gender, class, nationality, or race will have shaped what she has experienced. Her situatedness will shape what – contrasted with her specific lived experience – she will tend to believe and accept as the truth. If we zoom out and look at a given society as a whole, or even more globally at the webs of interconnectedness among different localities, we will find the same logic applies to those broader levels of relations.

Here, what seems intelligible within these larger contexts will again be shaped – yet not determined – by, interactions between patterns (shaped by and shaping the interactions of people). Let me try and give some general examples of what I mean: What do we think of as animated beings? Is a stone sentient? A tree? What kinds of questions – besides economic factors – have to be taken into consideration, when a new road is built? Should we factor in how the potential new road impacts on the flora and fauna? Are there important waterways to be considered? Are there sites of cultural, or religious, or spiritual significance in the area? Or, as in Iceland, are mythical creatures to be considered?<sup>49</sup> The point I am trying to make is that our geographic and cultural locality, as well as our specific individual situatedness, will shape where we stand/what we *see* in any of the above questions; if we perceive them as questions to be posed in the first place. Knowledge is never neutral. What is easily accessible is structured by the conditions within which we live. I subscribe to what I highlighted earlier in Nedelsky's work: that our relations constitute, yet never determine us (2011). To emphasize what I take to be at stake here, I will give a second, more concrete, example. I ask myself the following questions: how do I think of domestic work? Who do I associate with this work? Why? And on a different register - what do I think of undocumented migrant workers? To start with, do I see them? Do I have friends who are undocumented domestic workers or friends who employ them? Do I believe a woman is “illegal” because my country of citizenship does not “allow” her presence? Do I perceive her work as a contribution to the nation-state in which I reside? Do I think she should be granted certain rights and securities that accord with that fact? What do I think of the fact that my country of residency does not acknowledge the diploma she received from another nation-state? Do I

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<sup>49</sup> Iceland for example has experts that comment on how building projects may affect huldafólk (elves); see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erla\\_Stef%C3%A1nsd%C3%B3ttir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erla_Stef%C3%A1nsd%C3%B3ttir)

perceive a relationship between the country she comes from and the country she is working in? What do common histories and points of contact between these two countries look like? Within which larger geopolitical, economical frame are these two countries situated towards each other? How does my situatedness vis-à-vis her affect all of the above questions?

Third, the particular contexts within which responsiveness as a relational praxis is embedded importantly include relations of power (on the personal as well as on larger societal levels). Later in my discussion, in Chapter 5, I will tie this into the literature on epistemic ignorance to show how specific forms of ignorance – that for this matter is: non-responsiveness – can be non-accidental and structural.

But first I will draw on passages from the work of Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher, as well as, at the end of the chapter, Nedelsky, all of whom share similar concerns to mine regarding the entanglement of interconnectedness, power, and responsiveness. This is to give more concrete shape to what I have, quite abstractly, called “power” and to elucidate how this enmeshed linkage of responsiveness and power asymmetries is important for my argument. Bringing in Patricia Hill Collins and Teresa Brennan, I draw attention to how an ideologically invested epistemology of a strong subject/object distinction underpins processes of objectification within the arena of reproductive work. Drawing on the work of Allison Weir and María Lugones will further complicate a dichotomous framing of connection “versus” separation.

### *Privileged Irresponsibility*

Joan Tronto brings the question of power imbalances into the heart of relations of responsibility (2012, 310). “Once we begin to notice that assigning, accepting, deferring,

deflecting, and meeting responsibility involves power, some of the important asymmetries of responsibility are revealed” (308). This awareness of power is central to any analysis of reproductive work. I argue that responsibility, as a practice emerging out of being responsive to our interconnectedness, is not an additional task reserved for do-gooders, but an alternative to a specific tradition of non-responsiveness or ignorance; ignorance that can be – and is – used as a strategy by the privileged in these arrangements to carry out less reproductive work, or none at all, and to become careless. Thus, my conception is drawing on the practices of those who have been *doing* care work all along.

Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto expose in their analysis “the mechanism by which ignorance serves to prevent the relatively privileged from *noticing* the needs of others” (Tronto 1993, 121 italics added); a strategy that Tronto calls “privileged irresponsibility.”<sup>50</sup> I suggest that acting responsibly towards those others with whom we are connected is a practice of sustaining our livelihoods into the future. This differs from the dominant mindset in an individualist society, where the standard notion of autonomy – characterizing the independent, seemingly “self-sufficient” individual – is in conflict with responsibility as responsive relationality.<sup>51</sup> This must be the case if we agree that responsibility arises out of the responsiveness of our being in webs of interdependence. Michalinos Zembylas, Vivienne Bozalek and Tammy Shefer (2014) state in their discussion of Tronto’s notion of privileged irresponsibility:

The continued erasure of the hidden costs for certain groups of people who across global contexts, carry the burden of care, often displacing responsibility from both the state and those privileged, reflects in Tronto’s

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<sup>50</sup> According to Zembylas et al. (2014) Tronto uses the notion of privileged irresponsibility for the first time in her address to the American Political Science Association entitled *Chilly Racists* in 1990. With this phrase she highlighted the power racism confers to the majority group and the failure of that group to acknowledge their own exercise of power (Zembylas et al. 2014, 201).

<sup>51</sup> This does not apply to Nedelsky’s notion of “relational autonomy” that avoids an antagonism of autonomy and relationships (cf. Chapter 3).

term “privileged irresponsibility”, where those receiving caring services for their needs do not acknowledge that they are dependent on these services in order to live well in the world (205).

The notion of privileged irresponsibility thus implies a social hierarchy of differential power. It is the unacknowledged, taken-for-granted, privilege that “allows those who benefit from being in superior positions in a hierarchical system to remain oblivious about the part they play themselves in maintaining the system” (Zembylas et al. 2014, 207, drawing on Tronto 2013), via denying to see and ignoring the needs of others. As Tronto puts it: “[t]hose who are relatively privileged are granted by that privilege the opportunity simply to ignore certain forms of hardship that they do not face” (Tronto 1993, 120-121). As I understand privileged irresponsibility as a hurdle, standing in the way of transformation towards equality, it becomes crucial to me to realize *how* privileged irresponsibility is formed and perpetuated in practice.

Consider the following two extracts from my empirical material. The first passage is taken from the individual interview with one of the men in my sample, Theo. Towards the end of these interviews, I asked the participants to tell me about their overall satisfaction with how their households were organized, how the housework was divided, and how the distribution of work was agreed upon between the partners. Theo answers as follows:

Theo: I am content, yes, yes. Absolutely. Uh, what- uh, what could be even better were for example- well what I’d like to have- would be, that I- that the whole ironing thing would be taken off me. *That there simply would be ironed shirts in the wardrobe-* that would be a “Yes-scenario” (researcher laughs). That is just annoying, right? And um, well maybe that just takes a little bit of time, but it is- well uh- how should I say?- It would feel like major progress. Yeah, and that has to do kind of- with the regularity that our cleaner is here. So, she isn’t here that regularly [at the moment], and that is the reason for this. But, in general, I am



satisfied with how it is at the moment (II Theo, ln 440-449, my emphasis).

I will discuss the excerpt together with that from the individual interview with Frances below. The last question I posed to the respondents in the individual interviews took the form of a “utopian brainstorming;” I asked each person to envision the perfect home scenario and elaborate how it would have changed from the status quo, if at all.

Frances: Well (Pause), uh (Pause). Well, sometimes I’d like to have some assistance<sup>52</sup>, someone who helps me do the grocery shopping. Just, so that I don’t have to do that by myself and lug the heavy things around and stuff. Hence, grocery-shopping assistance that would be something-would be nice. But, uh (Pause), or, that in the evenings- All the things that you have to do in the evenings kind of- so that everything looks somewhat reasonably tolerable, right? That some good folk came and somehow – swiftly-swiftly – mops everything fleetly, and quickly fills the dishwasher, and promptly hangs up the laundry, and that- and everything quick-quick (smiles)-

I: That means-

Frances: *And relatively discreetly* and (laughs)- That would be somehow agreeable (II Frances, ln 676-686, my emphasis).

Both Theo and Frances see the way to a more enjoyable home experience as leading to more outsourcing. And – even though the specific circumstances that led them to this wish may be indeed different between Theo and Frances – they are both, structurally, in a privileged position to (at least partly) realize it. What I want to highlight with these two extracts is that not only do the informants here aim to pass on the respective performances

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<sup>52</sup> It is important to also see the gendered context here in which Frances is making this call for “assistance,” with her male partner performing very little housework. For the sake of clarity and readability, I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter how outsourcing of domestic work importantly serves to outsource (potential) conflict around the unequal distribution of chores between the opposite-sex partners in my sample.

of domestic work they are doing now, they furthermore long *not to see the work* as such as well as the *worker* any longer. In a way, they long to “*become*” *non-responsive*. I am not trying to say that they do so because they are particularly “mean” people; they were all very nice – to me. The point here is not to judge the personal character of my informants, but to highlight how particular practices come into existence, and make sense, within a specific context. I will argue below that at hand are processes of objectification. Yet, I do not only criticize objectification here as inappropriate and problematic, since it is directed at another human. I want to draw attention to what Patricia Hill Collins – with reference to Belenky et al. (1986) – calls an “epistemology of separation,” an ideologically invested epistemology of a strong subject/object distinction present in either/or thinking. This epistemology underpins the processes of objectification present in these concrete articulations of the participants.

*Epistemology of Separation, Epistemology of Connection, Epistemology of Curdling*

In her analysis of the objectification of Black women as the Other in the U.S.-context Patricia Hill Collins highlights some basic ideas within dominant paradigms in Western thought that serve to maintain “ideological justification for race, gender, and class oppression” (1991, 68), and crosscut all three systems. First, either/or dichotomous thinking – what bell hooks takes to be “the central ideological component of all systems of domination in Western society” (hooks 1984, quoted in Collins 1991, 68) – categorizes people, things and ideas “in terms of their difference from one another,” gaining “meaning only in *relation* to their counterparts” (Collins 1991, 68-69, italics in original). Importantly, it needs to be added, the constitutive relevance of relationality, in my terms, is disregarded. It seems crucial at this stage to clarify and add nuance by stressing the real difference between the use of the term “relational” to designate oppositional relations on

the one hand and relationality in the broader sense of connection – which I use – on the other hand. Second, coming back to Collins, difference in either/or dichotomous thinking is defined in oppositional terms: “Whites and Blacks, males and females, thought and feeling are not complementary counterparts” (69) but fundamentally different. They are *only* related by virtue of being defined as opposites.

Feeling cannot be incorporated into thought or even function in conjunction with it because in either/or dichotomous thinking, feeling retards thought, values obscure facts, and judgment clouds knowledge (69).

Third, objectification plays a pivotal role in this process of oppositional difference, in so far as “one element is objectified as the Other,” and is regarded “as an object to be manipulated and controlled” (69). Collins refers to Dona Richards, who suggests that dominant Western epistemology requires objectification, a process Richards describes as a “separation of ‘knowing self’ from the ‘known object’” (Richards 1980, quoted in Collins 1991, 69). Finally, Collins underlines that as oppositional dichotomies do not represent different but equal relationships, “they are inherently unstable” (1991, 70), as hierarchical systems are prone to conflict.

The foundations of a complex social hierarchy become grounded in the interwoven concepts of either/or dichotomous thinking, oppositional difference, and objectification. With domination based on difference forming an essential underpinning for this entire system of thought, these concepts invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority, hierarchical bonds that mesh with political economies of race, gender, and class oppression (70).

Again, I want to emphasize that either/or thinking does not only separate, or lead to a split into, subject and object, it moreover lets the energetic and affective connections “between an individual, other people and the surrounding environment” (Brennan 2000, 10) drop out of sight. Brennan links the tendency to think in subject/object terms to the rise of the interior consciousness, gaining momentum in the seventeenth century in Europe; within this paradigm, the subject is automatically separated from the environment (10). As Brennan both provokingly and elegantly puts it:

One can debate whether the birth of the interior consciousness marks modernity, a hard case to sustain because of the evident exceptions to it. I would submit that a better measure would be the uniform denial, in the West, of the transmission of affect that we find in effect from the seventeenth century onwards. Subject/object thinking, in brief, is the other side of thinking in terms of the transmission of affect. A psyche that thinks in subject/object terms denies its connection with “objects”. The subject is precisely other than the object (Brennan 2000, 10).<sup>53</sup>

Core values of dominant Western thinking – like rationality, objectivity, and impartiality – are wedded to a general tendency to overplay separation, to a compartmentalization into separate entities disregarding the relevance of connectedness and the connecting forces of the in-between. The construction of the independent, atomist, supposedly self-sufficient individual that I have retraced in the previous chapter as a historically and culturally specific, masculinist construction, is deeply anchored within the dominant Western epistemology of separation that denies relationality: an epistemology of ignorance. Collins elaborates the *both/and* conceptual orientation of a Black women’s standpoint that does not glorify separation and in which connectedness is “a primary way of knowing” (212).

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Luce Irigaray’s *Speculum of the other women* (1985). Irigaray argues that (mainstream) Western thought is based on a denial of the connection to the mother.

Black women's blues tradition serves as one example to highlight how "Afrocentric communication maintains the integrity of the individual and his or her personal voice, but does so in the context of group activity" (1991, 99). Here, "[i]ndividuality, rather than being stifled by group activity [...] actually flourishes in a group context" (99). From a Black women's standpoint "[s]elf is not defined as the increased autonomy gained by separating oneself from others. Instead, self is found in the context of family and community" (105). Collins retraces the contours of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology as an epistemology of connection, in which concrete experience<sup>54</sup> is a criterion of meaning. Dialogue, that is not the speech of subject and object, but between two subjects as "a humanizing speech" (hooks 1989, quoted in Collins 1991, 212), and empathy are critical in successfully assessing knowledge claims (Collins 1991, 235-237). An ethics of care as well as personal accountability and assuming responsibility for arguing validity (218) are key, in that "truth emerges through care" (217). Here,

[n]either emotion nor ethics is subordinated to reason. Instead, emotions, ethics, and reason are used as interconnected, essential components in assessing knowledge claims. In an Afrocentric feminist epistemology, values lie at the heart of the knowledge validation process such that inquiry always has an ethical aim (219).

Coming back to the passages I elaborated above from the two participants Theo and Frances, we can see that the objectifications inherent in their accounts are entrenched within an epistemology of separation. They deny and make invisible the interdependent relationship with a human person working as a domestic service provider for them and blank out the larger power structures that affect their relationships. I want to stress that,

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<sup>54</sup> I will emphasize the relevance of concrete, embodied experience in processes of knowledge formation regarding domestic and care work in Chapter 6.

besides being embedded within an epistemic script that provides the basis for the subject/object split they are performing, Theo and Frances, and the other informants, are acting within a social structure in which it makes sense to position oneself as disconnected from domestic work that is poorly valued.

We only learn by inference in the second half of Theo's quote, that the domestic worker would probably do the ironing for him if he were – as he hopes – no longer to do it. Initially, we just hear that “*there simply would be ironed shirts in the wardrobe,*” not how or via whose work they would happen to get there. Similarly, in the excerpt from Frances' interview, the good folk, who would do the “evening service” at her house, would have to do that “*relatively discreetly,*” that is, without being noticed. Both the domestic workers, as well as their work, are disappearing; they are out of sight. I argue, that the direction both of these movements of thought by Theo and Frances are taking is one of objectification wedded with abjection – which I will define below –, underpinned by an epistemology of separation. Let me add at this point that I do not want to glorify either separation or connection. I also do not intend to plot an epistemology of connection versus/against an epistemology of separation as opposing each other as a meta-binary. As feminist theorists have argued before me, I too claim that what we need are *both* connection *and* separation (cf. Weir 1996; 2013; Lugones 1994). That is, as Collins has mapped out in *Black Feminist Thought* (1991), to go beyond either/or dichotomous binary thinking a both/and paradigm is a constructive possibility. I understand Nedelsky's notions of the relational self and relational autonomy to be working in this way. The relational self is constituted not primarily by separation from connections, but through webs of relations. Nedelsky's concept of the relational self assumes *both* a unique individual *and* its community. Separation here is not plotted against connection,

autonomy is not one with isolation, separation not thought of as domination, but relational autonomy exists *within* relationships.

In her nuanced discussion of *Purity, Impurity, and Separation* (1994), María Lugones emphasizes that there is more to separation than fragmentation – a split into distinct and “pure” elements. Lugones distinguishes split separation from “curdle” separation. Separation as curdling, in Lugones’ account, is in line with the logic of multiplicity, not fragmentation. Her illustration of the different kinds of separation involves examples from the kitchen. Lugones describes split separation by invoking the image of separating an egg, into egg white and yolk. Split separation is thus trying to achieve *purity* of different “parts” (458). The curdling of mayonnaise, on the other hand, illustrates a more messy kind of separation – an exercise in *impurity* (459). Lugones highlights that mayonnaise, like all emulsions, does not split separate. Rather, its parts “coalesce” towards oil or water. When mayonnaise *curdles* it leaves “yolky oil and oily water” (ibid.).

Mestizaje, according to Lugones, is connected with both, split separation, and curdle separation:

When I think of Mestizaje, I think both of separation as curdling, an exercise in impurity, and of separation as splitting, an exercise in purity. I think of the attempt at control exercised by those who possess both power and the categorical eye and who attempt to split everything impure, breaking it down into pure elements (as in egg white and egg yolk) for the purposes of control. Control of creativity. And I think of something in the middle of either/or, something impure, something or someone mestizo, as both separated, curdled, and resisting in its curdled state. Mestizaje defies control through simultaneously asserting the impure, curdled multiple state and rejecting fragmentation into pure parts. In this play of assertion and rejection, the mestiza is unclassifiable, unmanageable. She has no pure parts to be “had”, controlled (460).

While I read Lugones central focus to be on Mestizaje's potential for creativity and resistance, she also describes in detail the logic of purity and associated control of the modern subject. It is to this logic that the mestiza has to resist to. According to Lugones' account of an epistemology of curdling "the social world is complex and heterogenous and each person is multiple, nonfragmented, embodied" (463). Compatible with the discussion of the autonomous individual in the previous chapter, Lugones argues that the modern subject is "fragmented, abstract, without particularity" (464). This subject is occupying a vantage point that is "privileged, simple, one-dimensional" (ibid.). Lugones' account furthermore implies what I have called a denial of interconnectedness: a specific form of ignorance inbuilt in this construction of the subject. According to Lugones, the "purification" of the modern subject requires that "his needs must be taken care of by others hidden in spaces relegated outside of public view, where he parades himself as pure" (466). Evidently, I am thinking of an important aspect in the outsourcing of domestic and care work here. That is, how reproductive work and domestic and care workers are "hidden," or actively "unseen." Lugones continues,

And it is important to [the subject's] own sense of things and of himself that he *pay little attention* to the satisfaction of the requirements of his sensuality, affectivity, embodiment. Satisfying the modern subject's needs requires being enmeshed in the multiple as the production of discrete units occurs amid multiplicity. Such production is importantly constrained by its *invisibility and worthlessness* in the eyes of those who attempt to control multiplicity. To the extent that the modern subject succeeds in this attempt to control multiplicity, the production is impelled by his needs. Those who produce it become producers of the structuring "perceived" by the lover of purity from the rational vantage point as well as its products. So in the logic of the lover of purity they exhibit a peculiar lack of agency, autonomy, self-regulating ability (466, italics added).



Thinking of the “producers” in Lugones’ quote here as domestic workers brings me back to Theo’s and Frances’ extracts. In the following section, I will conclude the discussion of the passages from their interviews by bringing in Julia Kristeva’s notion of the abject. Kristeva writes, “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (Kristeva 1982, 4). The logic described here by Kristeva is also what Lugones is writing in resistance to; an epistemology of “the lover of purity.” Lugones, in contrast, points to the creativity and power of *Mestizaje*. Speaking to the marginalized position of the *mestiza*, Lugones emphasizes that the “positive side of being threatening as ambiguous” (1994, 477) can be affirmed. “If it is ambiguous it is threatening *because* it is creative, changing, defiant of norms meant to subdue it” (*ibid.*, italics added).

### *Domestic Work and Abjection*

The concept of the abject is born within an epistemological paradigm of separation. Here, the self has to separate itself by negation from all that it is not for the subject to be formed; “me” and “not-me” as concepts are relational in a specific way: they become oppositional in the denial of any other kind of relationship. Borrowing from Allison Weir’s critique of the work of Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan and other early feminist relational theorists (1996, 43-64), we can say that the notion of the abject itself relies on an oppositional view of separation and connection. Abjection presumes separation as critical for subject formation: it is only through excluding the “not-me” that the “me” is founded. For Kristeva, Butler writes,

[t]he “abject” designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered “Other.” This appears as an

expulsion of alien elements, but the alien is effectively established through this expulsion. The construction of the “not-me” as the abject establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject (Butler 2008, 181).

The boundaries of the body are constituted only via “the ejection and transvaluation of something *originally part of* identity into a defiling otherness” (181-182, italics added). Thus, the focus here is on the cutting through of social bonds (to the mother or outside world), by rejecting the “not-me” and creating distance. In this way, subject formation requires and is constituted by separation. Kristeva establishes abjection as the foundation of objectification, in that unwanted elements from within one’s realm are taken outside (the self). “Abjection is the feeling that one has revolting (including excremental) substances within; objectification comes from the need to exclude these substances by depositing them in the other, which brings the other, as object, into being” (Brennan 2000, 35). In her development of the abject Kristeva draws on Mary Douglas’ book *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1996 [1966]), a groundbreaking work in social anthropology. Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox emphasize the importance of spatialization in both Douglas’ and Kristeva’s concepts.

As with Douglas’s dirt and pollution behaviours, Kristeva’s abject is articulated and interpreted through spatial metaphors, and abjection refers to spatialized processes, the interactions between material, corporeal, environmental, psychological and social realms and systems through which the subject or society attempt to impose or maintain a state of purity (Campkin/Cox 2012, 5).

The notion of the abject “accounts for a greater level of ambivalence on part of the subject towards the pollutant or potentially pollutant object” (ibid.) then Douglas’ theory allows for. Moreover, Campkin and Cox claim, that in Kristeva’s notion of “spaces of

abjection,” we find a more overtly political theoretical tool than in Douglas’ concept that may be put to use to flesh out the “relationships between marginalized peoples and their spatial and material contexts” (ibid.).

Still, I understand the structuralist Douglas’ – and the poststructuralist Kristeva’s – arguments of rejection and abjection (albeit to different degrees) as both anchored in what Collins critiques as either/or thinking. In *Purity and Danger* Douglas asserts that the “pollution behaviors” in the modern West were not different in kind from those in the so-called “primitive” societies she studied. Douglas establishes that dirt is a relational concept; “socially constructed, culturally and historically specific” (Campkin/Cox 2012, 4). In Douglas’ account the impure is anomalous, yet always in relation to a specific norm. Dirt or pollution in Douglas’ analysis emerges out of a process of differentiation into an “inside” and “outside.” “Dirt then,” Douglas claims, “is never a unique isolated event. Where there is dirt there is system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves *rejecting* inappropriate elements” (Douglas 1996, 36, italics added). Douglas describes that “our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to *confuse or contradict cherished classifications*” (37, italics added). In Douglas’ narrative, the focus is on how cleanliness and contamination “are part of a classificatory system, used by all cultures, to police boundaries” (Campkin/Cox 2012, 4). I think it productive to also turn this argument upside down and scrutinize how, by the exclamation and very definition of a transgression, a boundary – as norm – is produced and stabilized. María Lugones makes an analogous point by highlighting that Douglas describes various ways of dealing with the impure, as anomalous, “but she does not emphasize that *rendering* something impure is a way of *dealing with it*” (Lugones 1994, 468, italics added).

Douglas assumes a bounded self, or to be more precise – through her description of the controlling of borders/boundaries – she narrates the formation of a bounded self; in her analysis Douglas furthermore equates pollution, which is the transgression of boundaries, with danger.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, I argue, it is permeability itself that becomes a potential threat; I will elaborate on permeability in the next chapter where I also discuss my notion of “semipermeable membranes.” According to Douglas, “[t]he body is a model which can stand for any *bounded* system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious” (Douglas 1996, 116, italics added). And – Judith Butler paraphrases Douglas in *Gender Trouble* – “unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment” (2008, 180). We have to be clear that what is threatened by “uncontrolled permeability” is the *bounded* self, which is embedded within either/or thinking.

Theories of pollution and abjection that have evolved in their nuances since Mary Douglas’ initial contribution can be a vital element of critique of the status quo. And, I argue, projects like those from Lugones, Collins, and Weir are fruitful in portraying ways in which to go beyond the old binaries of dominant Western epistemologies. Emphasizing the transformative potential of the impure, the messy and in-between, or the both/and – all indicate ways in which to go beyond dichotomies. The creativity to be found in responsiveness to interconnection, and affective “spill-over” that indicates that there is already a lot of ambivalence and messiness inherent *even in* the supposedly pure and contained, autonomous individual opens up new paths as well.

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<sup>55</sup> Lugones claims that Douglas also perceives power in impurity. It is not relevant to Douglas project, however, to distinguish structuring into oppressive and nonoppressive ones (Lugones 1994, 468). Lugones’ purpose, in contrast to Douglas’ “is precisely to understand the particular oppressive character of the modern construction of social life and the power of impurity in resisting and threatening this oppressive structuring” (ibid.).

I agree with Campkin and Cox that theoretical conceptions of “dirt and the abject are [...] useful tools for understanding and confronting inequality and marginality” (2012, 5). This is because they can highlight that definition and assignment of what (and who) is dirt(y) is never socially or politically neutral. Racist constructions often utilize metaphors of the other being dirty (6). And the “ordering of people in terms of their proximity to dirt operates both in relation to perceived personal dirtiness *and responsibilities for cleaning dirt away*” (ibid., italics added). As I argue throughout this thesis the assignment and performance of “dirty work” (Anderson 2007), is vital in the reproduction of unequal social relations. I thus concur with Campkin and Cox’ assertion that “[t]he ability of dirt to act as a means of social classification is revealed vividly in the organization of paid domestic labour” (2012, 6).

The concrete tasks of social reproduction that are talked about in the excerpts from Theo and Frances – ironing and the “evening service” respectively – are tasks that are *socially not seen*. The low value ascribed to them as “dirty work” makes them unwanted, abject elements in this reading that my informants want to reject and expel from their domain. Feminized and racialized subjects that take the shape of the domestic worker or, in Frances’ example, are transferred to the fictitious realm, figure as “container” for the abject dirt and are linked with associated practices.<sup>56</sup>

As moments in which privileged irresponsibility is exercised, by denying not only the needs of the domestic workers but ignoring their presence altogether (and hence also obscuring one’s own – met – needs and factual interdependence), the excerpts from Theo and Frances refer to a social hierarchy, to unequal relations of power, in which only some can afford the luxury not to see certain things. An epistemology grounded in either/or

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<sup>56</sup> A detailed retracing of how abjection here intersects with the maternal body (cf. Melanie Klein *Early stages of the Oedipus conflict*, 1928; *The Kristeva Reader*, 1986), and a discussion of Nancy Chodorow’s notion of the maternal subject and feminist literature on this would have been interesting. For the sake of brevity I will not include this.

thinking, that glorifies separation here interacts with the low value ascribed to domestic and care work and the degradation of people performing reproductive work. The passages show how privileged irresponsibility is produced in mundane, concrete contexts. Let me remind the reader that my – particular – embodied presence formed part of these “concrete contexts.” The closeness in social location between my respondents and myself – as “majority Austrians” (Haidinger 2013, 18-19)<sup>57</sup> with similar class backgrounds as well as closeness in age – facilitated the kind and degree of openness in which information was shared with me, and influenced the concrete shapes the interactions took.

There are more examples in my material that can be read in this way of abjection – and in which the people performing domestic cleaning become maternal and/or raced subjects for their employers. As feminized and racialized/ethnicized subjects they, too, become invisible and are bracketed from being cared for; they become subjects who are typically giving, not receiving care. Let me now turn more directly to the relation of dirt and subjectivities.

### **Corporeality and the Racialization of Affects**

Aníbal Quijano (2007; 2008) emphasizes that racialization was a central part of the colonality of labor. I want to highlight that the worth of work – in the hierarchical system Quijano describes – was not only determined by being paid or unpaid but also in its correlation with corporeality. The darkest people, who were conceptualized as of least value, were performing the most physical strenuous work on the plantations. A more general devaluation of corporeality – coming out of a binary split into mind versus matter (Brennan 2000; 2004) – is thus interwoven with a colonial, racialized script. Domestic and care work is also devalued as “bodywork” (Twigg 2000); and the devaluation of

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<sup>57</sup> One person in my sample had migration background.

corporeality – in general – is an important part of the analysis of the low value ascribed to reproductive work. As the case of outsourcing shows, the devaluation of domestic and care work cannot be fully grasped without considering its racialized and ethnicized dimension.

Rosie Cox (2016) details how dirt is utilized as a structuring concept – morally and spatially – that is used to demarcate class and ethnic/racial difference, and create “order.” In this way, the historic introduction of urban sewage systems, much like contemporary outsourcing, can be read as technologies governing arbitrariness/contact/permeability, by literally moving shit and dirt away from the subject. Let me reiterate, that I see this conceptualization of dirt as an excellent metaphor of the dominant system of thought I am trying to critique in this thesis. As I have retraced above, I see the Western notion of “dirt,” in its role of demarcating the “pure” subject, as rooted in binary, oppositional, hierarchical thinking; a way of thinking in which connection is ignored and invisibilized, and in which the bounded self emerges as cut off from its complicated web of relations. I argue that creating alternatives to this dominant paradigm involves praxis; and requires subjects, privileged in the current system, to take up their fair share of “dirty” work. By way of this, we can “pollute” and disturb the current system, and its currencies of demarcation. In Chapter 6 I will argue that the participation of privileged subjects (those furthest removed from the performance of reproductive work) in this work, and the insights *learned in the process*, can trigger an ethical, and epistemological shift. If we want this change towards a more caring and sustainable world to happen, white, middle-class men – those assigned higher value in the colonial and patriarchal script – need to be also involved in the actual *doing* of domestic cleaning. Let me here elaborate what “closeness to dirt” in the current system entails.

*Closeness to Dirt and Abject Bodies*

Explicit racialization and ethnic stereotyping of domestic workers were very rare in my empirical sample. Yet, I would identify the following extract on the “dirty” cleaning practices of a former domestic worker as such a case. The quote comes from a passage at the very end of Jakob’s individual interview when he expands on complaints or grievances on his part in the interaction with domestic workers. Part of the reason why he and his partner were not satisfied with their previous worker, Jakob explains, was that they believed she cleaned everything with window cleaner, a practice that Jakob sees as potentially harmful to one’s health, especially when the cleaning agent gets in contact with the fridge and food. Jakob: “You can’t let them buy [the cleaning products], because they buy anything (emphasized), or they just clean – well like *they* (emphasized) clean” (II Jakob, ln 1314-1315).<sup>58</sup> Implying a lesser cleaning standard of an othered worker, the blunt ethnic stereotyping here leads from the alleged practice of one domestic worker to a generalization about a vague “them” of migrant women working in domestic cleaning in general, or East Europeans in particular.

In her paper *Cleaning up: Gender, Race and Dirty Work at Home*, Rosie Cox (2016) looks at the “relationship between dirt and the home” and how this “is mapped onto different groups of people through their imagined and actual closeness to dirt” (3). On the circular logic of the devaluation of domestic work and the degradation of the people performing said work, Cox writes:

The stigma of working with dirt means that domestic workers find themselves trapped within a vicious circle, which defines domestic cleaning as low status because it is done by women, and women as low status because they deal with dirt. Migrant women and women of colour

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<sup>58</sup> “...weil die kaufen irgendwas (emphasized), oder putzen halt so wie sie (emphasized) putzen.”



are additionally caught up in a cycle that characterizes them as appropriate people to do dirty work, and thereafter stigmatizes them because of their contact with other people's dirt (Cox 2016, 15).

I fully agree with Cox's assessment and want to add the importance of corporeality into this logic of devaluation. Embodiment plays a pivotal role in the practices of reproductive work: first, bodies are involved and moved in the performance of domestic and care work; and second reproductive work is targeting (also) the physical aspects of human well-being. I thus want to emphasize that the Western cultural depreciation and perception of mundane, physical (domestic) work hinges on the binary hierarchy of matter versus mind (Brennan 2000; 2004). Combined with the fantasmatic reversal separating direction or agency from activity, which Brennan (2000) elaborated on, this brings me to Sianne Ngai's (2009) conceptualization of the racialized affect of "animatedness."

Ngai elaborates how "being moved," supposedly the "most basic or minimal of all affective conditions" (91), ceases to be a neutral state and "becomes twisted into the image of the overemotional racialized subject, abetting his or her construction as unusually receptive to external control" (91). The "kind of exaggerated emotional expressiveness" (94), Ngai calls animatedness, comes to function as an ethnic or racial marker and is intimately tied to the *body*. Writing in the US-context Ngai asserts, that

it is the cultural representation of the African-American that most visibly harnesses the affective qualities of liveliness, effusiveness, spontaneity, and zeal to a disturbing racial epistemology, and makes these variants of "animatedness" function as bodily (hence self-evident) signs of the raced subject's naturalness or authenticity (95).

The transmission of (racialized) affects permeates the field of outsourcing beyond what we can cognitively grasp and control. Carrying “residues of meaning” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 5) affects are seeping into our corporeal habits. Gutiérrez Rodríguez shares a quote from Sybille, an employer in Vienna, about her discomfort regarding the use of the word “cleaning woman” (Putzfrau) for the domestic worker.

My child hasn't learned to clean up his own things or his dirt, if you will. I am not in favor of the derogatory image he has of cleaning ladies. Well, I am not sure where he gets this from, since I am really not one who would use the term “cleaning lady.” This is really important for me that he at least sees that we can be thankful that we have someone. And the disadvantage is maybe that the men don't – well, that then there really isn't a fifty-fifty division. That men are again able to dodge out of responsibility is a big disadvantage (2010, 113; cf. MAIZ 2004, 64).

I believe the passage illustrates well how children learn about their particular place within society in everyday embodied interactions. Before I continue with the analysis, I want to contrast the quote with another passage from Gutiérrez Rodríguez' book – this time, an extract from Elvira, an Ecuadorian woman who works as a domestic worker in Hamburg:

I don't know how, how other women feel, if they also experience the same or how they deal with it. Besides, there is a reevaluation in the entire society as to what cleaning is and so it is simply a job for the lost. So... it's for the invisible. So... and I believe that to change the term *cleaning* to another term, this won't make the job better. I find the conditions are the worst and not at all the name (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 164, italics in original).

For Elvira, and many other domestic workers, the precarious conditions under which they are performing domestic and care work “are the worst.” It is these circumstances, which

are deemed fine by employers and the nation-state that also transmit, and reinforce the negative imagery *felt* by domestic workers. As Siphokazi Mdlankomo, a former domestic worker turned chef, from South Africa puts it, “People they take domestic workers as nothing [...]. They think, if you are a domestic worker you are stupid, you don’t know anything, you have no brain. They treat you like dirt. [...] It’s so sad, it makes me sick.”<sup>59</sup>

More than the words being used to communicate or describe certain practices, children growing up in outsourcing households pick up on the affective content being transmitted between embodied agents and the larger, unequal structures within which the social interactions are taking place. It is in this way that the outsourcing of domestic cleaning works to perpetuate the non-responsive, or ignorant, broader structures. Children in outsourcing households not only learn that they can, or should, distance themselves from domestic and care work but moreover who, exactly, is “suitable” to do this work instead – racialized/ethnicized and feminized subjects. Beyond this cognitive and embodied knowledge, they are immersed in the affective relationships between differently positioned people in the contact zones of private households; socialized into their specific position of “privileged irresponsibility” in the reproduction of the coloniality of labor. I thus claim that they not only learn that and how to distance themselves from this work, but do so while being intricately and corporeally shaped by/into the workings of racism and colonialism. They learn in practice where they sit in the hierarchical structures of the organization of reproductive work, and about their place within a colonial world order in which ignorance comes to figure as a central part in the reproduction of global inequalities. Picking up on this, I will finally argue in Chapter 6, that it is the practices that will have to change.

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<sup>59</sup> Siphokazi Mdlankomo and Marissa Begonia on the BBC program the conversation. A podcast of the program can be found at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0490x0t>, Last accessed the 07. 10. 2016

Like the stereotypical modern housewife as well as the figure of the racialized servant who take care of the house while the head of the household works outside the house and the children are at school, the domestic workers my informants are employing are often performing the domestic cleaning while none of the household members is present. Later, I will discuss how ambivalences in the relationships between employers and employees are intensified when they meet in these private spaces. Some of the female informants told me that they just recently got to know a little bit more about the people who have worked in their homes for years – now that they have babies and are on parental leave. Before that, both male and female employers in my sample were at work while the domestic workers cleaned their homes. If they happened to be at home during that time, they claim in unison, they would leave once the worker arrives. As will become clear, this arrangement is also owing to many domestic workers' preference – for a variety of reasons – to work alone.

One array of questions that struck me in the early stages of this project was: how to conceptualize relationships between people who are trying hard not to be connected? How can I conceptualize relational selves, if interdependence between the individuals I am interested in is rendered invisible and ignored, when bonds are damaged and severed? And quite practically, how can the connections between these employers and employees come into focus, how can my informants even get to know the people who work for them, if they never meet?

### **Affective Relations in an “Empty” Space?**

Asked how much he knows about their recent domestic worker as well as previous workers, Theo tells me:

Theo: Uh. *I've tried not to be there when they are here.* Uh. Did I know very much about them? Yes and no. Mostly it was on the recommendation of someone, and I quite simply trusted that that was ok – so that you can give someone your key and- That there is quite simply trust. And- uh-

I: But you didn't encounter them a lot after that?

Theo: Uh, no, I didn't encounter them a lot. Yet, if I did- if I met them, then uh- mostly then- Well then we did talk about private stuff mostly. Well, because it's just interesting to me if they have a family? Kids? Where they come from et cetera So, there are mostly quite fascinating stories behind it (II Theo, ln 164-174, my emphasis).

At first, Theo reads my question targeting an elaboration on the connection between him and the domestic worker as suggesting potential negligence in letting a stranger into their house. I will not go into detail of this initial string of his answer, except for highlighting that the passage shows how materiality and affect interlink. So far I have mainly discussed the transmission of affects between subjects. Here a subject-object relation comes into play when an object – the key that is given to the domestic worker – comes to carry trust affectively, and is associated with a quite contradictory move in which this intimate object is given to someone the owner sustains a very thin relationship with.

In the present passage, I will focus on Theo's claim that he "tried to" not be there when the domestic worker is around. Prompted to elaborate what he means by this, the following conversation evolves:

I: Uh- So you said before, you tried to rather not be present. Why is that?

Or how [did you mean it]?

Theo: Because it is uncomfortable for me.

I: Uncomfortable.

Theo: Yes. Well, it is uncomfortable to be in the apartment and then maybe even do something that is somehow *lazy* (uses the English

word)- uh- and then there is someone buzzing around you (researcher smiles), and- and cleans. I mean that is embarrassing/unpleasant<sup>60</sup>. So, that somehow – I don't know – the flat as intimate space, uh- that is- I feel quite simply hassled<sup>61</sup>. Yes, if something like that happens. Interestingly that is different – maybe added in an aside –

I: Yes, please-

Theo: that is definitely different if I- If I'm at the office - stay longer at the office. And the cleaning lady comes at around 7 or half past 7. There, interestingly, I don't feel- I don't even feel bothered. (Pause) Even though, they are also buzzing around. But that is somehow different- associated with a different feeling (II Theo, ln 177-193).

At the office, Theo reiterates, “No, it is not- It is not uncomfortable. No” (II Theo, ln 199).

Theo tells me that he has already been paying for the service of domestic cleaning for years when he was living by himself, long before he moved in with his current partner. Although it is important for Theo to have a domestic worker come to his house, it makes him feel uncomfortable, hassled, to be confronted with her actual bodily presence. Theo implies in the passage that his feeling of being uncomfortably touched by the workers' working presence might be a result of her – although invited – felt “invasion” of his private sphere while he is not working. He does not feel the same way, Theo narrates, in the public sphere of his workspace. Besides the different setting in the “private” space, the factors of work, or activity, as well as available time seem to be playing a significant role in the different perception. Another possible explanation of the perceived “invasion” of the worker that I discuss below is related to emotions of guilt. What is also different between the contexts in Theo's example – although he does not mention this here – is that

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<sup>60</sup> German: Also das ist mir einfach unangenehm, ja.

<sup>61</sup> German: bedrängt

the worker in the public space of his workplace would be legally employed. Meaning he or she who has legal residency status and a working permit also has access to the legal rights every<sup>62</sup> worker/employee<sup>63</sup> in Austria has. From his or her gross pay, wage tax, and social security contribution are deducted, – the latter covering health insurance, accident insurance for the workplace, retirement pension, and unemployment insurance. His or her work moreover falls under specific regulations of a collective trade union agreement (Kollektivvertrag) that defines minimum wages and annual leave among other things. He or she has access to established carers leave for dependent relatives, guaranteed periods of notice, as well as eight weeks compulsory maternity leave and parental leave models (with compensation and dismissal protection). Workers who are paid outside the legal frame – the form that is common in private households in Austria and that all of the employers in my sample have chosen – gain no access to any of these rights mentioned above through their work (cf. MAIZ 2004).

Theo, and other informants as well are not neutral to the embodied presence of the domestic workers. I claim that even if they try to interact personally only minimally with the domestic workers, they are affected by the relationship that they have entered in ways that both, go beyond their intentions, and – moreover – interact with affective energies that go beyond the individuals involved. This point shall be strengthened by putting forward claims from Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez' book *Migration, domestic work and affect: a decolonial approach on value and the feminization of labor* (2010).

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<sup>62</sup> However, this does not include the increasing number of self-employed people. Over the past decades many jobs that used to be conventional employment-relationships are being “outsourced” from companies as well so that people in many sectors of the Austrian labor market are practically “forced” to now be freelancers. Many of them, also, live in progressively precarious conditions.

<sup>63</sup> The Austrian law differentiates between ArbeiterInnen and Angestellten. (cf. the website of the Austrian Economic Chambers for details: [https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Service/Arbeitsrecht-und-Sozialrecht/Arbeitsrecht/Beschaefigungsformen/Arbeiter\\_und\\_Angestellte.html](https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/Service/Arbeitsrecht-und-Sozialrecht/Arbeitsrecht/Beschaefigungsformen/Arbeiter_und_Angestellte.html), Last accessed the 24. 01. 2016)

*How to Digest Inequality Emotionally and Bodily?*

For Gutiérrez Rodríguez affects often engage “unspecified” energies (14) that “unfold context” as well as “evolve within a concrete historical and geopolitical context” (5). It is through these contexts that affects come to carry “residues of meaning,” and are “haunted by past intensities not always spelled out and conceived in the present” (5). This quality connects them to both the concepts of responsiveness as well as epistemic ignorance I am using. First, I think that affects here can be understood as a connecting piece between responsiveness, as acts of being open towards our interconnectedness, and responsibility. The use of affects as a concept can highlight how the corporeal dimension of these processes that finally lead to practices of ir/responsibility cannot be secondary; or better: that to assume cognitive and bodily processes as separate as such is drawing a faulty picture. Second, I perceive affects to connect to epistemic ignorance in so far as Gutiérrez Rodríguez establishes that they are also “temporal and spatial constellations of certain times, intricately impressed in legacies of the past and itineraries of the present/future” (5). Through such a reading, of specific intensities of the past (e.g. colonialism) that shape our relationships in the present, collective tendencies can be deciphered as non-accidental (i.e. shaping the racialization of affects that Ngai (2009) analyzes).

Excerpts from the empirical studies Gutiérrez Rodríguez draws on in her book (2010) spell out that the empty rooms domestic workers take care of are not so empty after all. There – in Gutiérrez Rodríguez analysis – we meet Elena, a domestic worker from Hamburg (127-133). Elena tells about her experience of cleaning a “huge apartment” for a person who seems to hardly use it, which makes her “mad” (127). Elena herself lives with four others in a small two-room apartment.

The “lifeless” atmosphere in her employer’s apartment makes [Elena] “mad,” she says. She poses the question of how to deal with the constant



experience of inequality, how to digest it emotionally and bodily if it has no rationale. This unlived in “huge apartment” makes no sense to Elena. She responds to this irrationality by feeling angry. Her statement, “above a certain monthly income, there is nothing left or the path is lost,” seems to convert the inexplicable into some kind of moral sense. Feelings and mind are summoned to find a response to the fundamental inequality that sustains the content and context of Elena’s domestic work. The energies released in the apartment, described by Elena as “lifeless,” have an impact on her. They are affective and they affect her. Elena’s extract speaks to the absurdity of an everyday life organized within empty spaces. Nonetheless, while the apartment seems absent of “everyday life,” life is infused into this space through Elena’s presence and attention (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 128).

Gutiérrez Rodríguez refers to Christina Vega Solís, who studies Latin American care workers in Catalonia and argues that “attention” and “being attentive” are “specific skills that unfold in the orientation towards another person” (128). Gutiérrez Rodríguez reads Solís’ use of “being attentive” as an affective force that “leaves an imprint, a trace” (128) on the domestic worker. Gutiérrez Rodríguez further argues, and I strongly agree with her, that this also holds when the attention is not aimed at a person directly, as is the case with domestic cleaning.

While Elena’s attention does not directly address a person, as her employer is absent, she is attentive towards the latter’s environment. The objects she cleans and arranges are infused with her employer’s energies. These energies are affective and affect her. They leave imprints on her body and mind. It is in this transmission of affect that social and economic inequalities are sensed bodily and perceived as sensation (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 128-129).

I want to highlight that this “imprint” that Gutiérrez Rodríguez’ describes above leaves its trace not only on domestic workers but also has consequences for their employers. Through their activities within the private space of the outsourcing households, the workers also leave an imprint on that very space and those inhabiting it. The people outsourcing domestic cleaning, even if they are extremely inattentive to their space and/or the workers looking after that space, are also affected by the relationships that they enter – although differently than the workers.

Domestic workers and their employers share the same space – a space that is cared for by the domestic workers whose work products are enjoyed by the employers. This enjoyment is demonstrated by the following quote from Alice’s individual interview: “It’s pleasurable. Well, it feels pleasurable to come home and [the cleaning] has already been dealt with” (II Alice, In 192-193). Even in cases in which employers and domestic workers do not meet at all, they interact via sharing this space. Elena, the domestic worker from Hamburg, discloses a feeling of “closeness” that emerges through her activity in this empty household that is marked by the “absence” of her employer, by distance. Gutiérrez Rodríguez eloquently puts the structural asymmetry of these relationships, understood in affective terms, into words:

Elena’s labor is determined through the affects produced in and through the relations in this space. She herself is involved in this relationality and transforms it through her activities. The touching of objects, the arranging of the space, inevitably leave the presence of another person, *connecting the household with another social space brought in by the domestic worker*.

Although largely ignored by the employer, Elena’s presence contributes to the recreation of the apartment as a space of potential conviviality. Interestingly, this is not perceived as such by the employer. Instead the employer detaches the affective and sensual forces from a person,

objectifying and reducing her domestic work to the mere realization of physical tasks. However, when a domestic worker enters a household, *she immediately becomes part of a network of energetic and affective relations*. Her presence bears social suffering as well as individual yearnings, hopes and joy. She enters the space of the private household and encounters the affective traces of the people inhabiting it (2010, 131, italics added).

I argue that this social suffering, individual yearning, the hopes, and joy, that come with the embodied presence of the person performing domestic labor, as well as the inequality of the context in which she enters the household, also affect the employers. It does so in different ways; and it also leads to diverse responses. Some passages from my interviews with work-outsourcing households show how employers are responsive to the domestic workers. In these passages, people paying for domestic cleaning perceive the complexity of the worker as a human person and are empathetic towards her. The following extracts from Viktoria's individual interview are such an instance. Viktoria has employed Ivana, the same domestic worker for about ten years. Of all the employers I have interviewed, Viktoria knows the most, by far, about the woman who works for her and her partner. I shall also point out that she and Ivana converse in Ivana's mother tongue. Viktoria describes her relationship with Ivana as good, yet she does not see it as egalitarian.

I: Ok. Uh. How would you describe your relationship?

Viktoria: Uh- Very familiar. Uh. Yes, I mean, well we know each other now because- over the last two years I've been here while she was cleaning. Naturally, we talk to each other. And I help as well because I don't want to sit on the couch while she is doing it. And, there we talk a lot about family. And she often asks for advice with her children. But- Yeah, well it's not a very intimate relationship- I would not tell her about my problems or something like that (II Viktoria, ln 89-96)

Viktoria's response to the presence of Ivana is very different from that of Theo above. She, also, is affected, touched by the inequalities between her and the worker; when she says "I would not tell her about my problems," Viktoria implies either a distant, or formal relationship, or potentially one that is not at eye level. However, her embodied response to the affective energies emerging in the encounter between her and the domestic worker is rather mediated by an ideal of closeness, which prompts her to "help," cleaning side by side with Ivana. In a way, Viktoria can be seen as trying to bridge the existing *structural* asymmetry that is affectively present between her and Ivana with her *individual* body. Let me underline how gendered these corporeal responses of both Viktoria and Theo are. While Viktoria's reaction to what must also be a feeling of discomfort triggered by the societal hierarchies that have entered the domestic space through her and Theo's arrangement with the domestic worker is to move closer to Ivana (and Ivana's position), Theo is moving away from Ivana. He is reacting to the same context by distancing; trying to disconnect and separate himself from the affectively disconcerting relation he has entered.

Viktoria's responsiveness towards Ivana also surfaces in her explanation of who does the washing in their household. I asked all of my respondents to tell me for every domestic activity they could think of who usually performed it:

I: Doing the laundry?

Viktoria: I do the laundry myself.

I: You do.

Viktoria: Uh. Yes, because I- I don't like if [Ivana] does dirty laundry- I wouldn't find that pleasant for her if she had to do that (laughs). Yes (II Viktoria, ln 118-122).

Viktoria does not want Ivana to do the “dirty work” of the laundry because it might not be “pleasant” for the domestic worker. Thus, in the encounter between Viktoria and Ivana *affection* emerges, denoting the relational character of affects (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 129). Brian Massumi distinguishes between affects, indicating the moment of *affect*, and *affection*, representing the encounter between “affected” and “affecting” body (Massumi 2002, quoted in Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 129). Affects do not exist as closed entities, “they are energies and flows, impacting on people’s bodies and shaping people’s actions” (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 129). Viktoria factors Ivana’s (assumed) feelings towards the laundry into her decision. I believe that she does so because she is affected by their interactions – in a different way than Theo – and the affective relationship that emerges between Ivana and her. From what I gather from Viktoria’s account, she cares about Ivana.

And, we can infer Viktoria herself assigns a special status to the laundry that is different to other domestic tasks. One reading of this special status might be that the washing is something that Viktoria perceives as dirty and/or intimate that she might be embarrassed to outsource; or that it would feel like a transgression of the boundary of her intimate space to concede the handling of “dirty clothes.” Viktoria tells me that her male partner does not do the laundry either. “I’ve always done the laundry. Yes. I don’t know – I also didn’t really allow for him to do that. He also doesn’t like it. Yes” (In 146-147). For Viktoria, the laundry is something that she wants to contain within her realm; she feels responsible for it – as she seems to do for other people’s feelings in regards to it.

Coming back to the general question of responsiveness of the informants in my sample towards the domestic workers; Viktoria is rather the exception here. Overall, simplified images of the people performing domestic cleaning and very thin relationships between domestic workers and their employers are stronger represented in my interviews.

At the same time, responsiveness on the part of the domestic worker is a prerequisite skill, a requirement the employers demand *from* the workers. Let me note at this point that attentiveness to dirt is related to culturally distinct ideas and ideals of tidiness and cleanliness (cf. Douglas 1996), as well as a political construction *and* projection – as the latter it can surface as racial slurs.

### *Responsiveness Requested from Domestic Workers*

Jakob and his partner did not use the services of a domestic worker for a while and had just recently started to pay someone to do the work of cleaning again. At the time of the first interview Azra, the new worker cleaning for Jakob and his partner has only been at their apartment once. Prompted to tell me what he knows about Azra Jakob reports the following:

Jakob: As she has only been here once so far, I know next to nothing about her. So, I know her name, uh; I only know that she- Or what I gathered is that – in contrast to the previous cleaning lady – she is herself very organized and structured. And uh- Yes, somehow- well [I have] that positive feeling somehow- that you have someone<sup>64</sup> here who again *sees the things* and doesn't only do what he [sic] has written down on the post-it, or does what you have told him [sic] – but rather somehow, yes somehow thinks- So that he [sic] says, yeah ok so if this is there, then – Well, with the previous [domestic worker] we once experienced this classic (emphasized by speaker) with cleaning the kitchen. So we said, ok, actually it would be time for the kitchen shelves to all be emptied and wiped clean. And then you show [her] how to do this and then it's done only with that exact shelf.

I: Ok.

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<sup>64</sup> Jakob uses the masculine generic form here for the female worker.

Jakob: So, the- Well [I know] rather this professional competence [of Azra]. Because, the private background – that was the same with the previous cleaning lady – that well, eventually that comes a little bit with time (II Jakob, In 1207-1223, my emphasis)

Jakob alludes to the fact here that responsiveness towards what he and his partner require in their home space and attentiveness to the specific necessary tasks on the part of the domestic worker are the most important skills and competencies he is looking for in somebody performing this work. He judges the previous domestic worker as not living up to the wanted standards because she did *not* see; that is, she was not attentive to the tasks the space required to qualify as a livable, enjoyable home space for him and his partner. A different explanation of the previous worker's supposed "incompetence" might be found in her conscious refusal to have her work controlled in the patronizing way Jakob outlines above. In this alternative reading not being "appropriately attentive" to dirt, and thus "failing" to be responsive to their employers' needs, can be seen as an act of resistance from a vulnerable position within unequal relations of power.

Before I continue to explicate this argument further, I want to clarify my use of the word *responsiveness* and how I distinguish its' meaning to that of *attentiveness*. I use responsiveness when I talk about being responsive to the ontological condition of interdependence, and for being responsive towards other subjects (i.e. domestic workers or their employers); I mainly use attentiveness to designate a relation to objects (i.e. dirt). I want to be clear that I do not assume that responsiveness to subjects and attentiveness to dirt are related, such that a more sensitive dirt perception would lead someone to be more responsiveness to others; this kind of logic would indeed be problematic. I assert that there is no necessary causal relation between these two "sets" of what we perceive – towards what we are attentive to, or become responsive to. That is, responsiveness to a

particular person (i.e. a domestic worker) – or non-responsiveness that can lead to the objectification of the domestic worker – are distinct practices that emerge between concrete people within a context that is shaping the process. Attentiveness towards dirt (i.e. within one's private space) is an entirely different matter. Having clarified this, I will now add that even though I do not claim a necessary relation between the two topics exists, in general, there are particular instances in which they do importantly overlap. I see two relevant aspects in which attentiveness and responsiveness link in the field of the outsourcing of domestic work. First, in the affective labor of domestic workers attentiveness towards dirt can become (and is often expected to become) coupled to the desires of the worker's employers. A competent domestic worker thus is not only *attentive* towards dirt (that is always culturally and politically constructed) but is importantly *responsive* to a specific employer's needs in regard to *their* concept of tidiness and cleanliness. General attentiveness towards dirt, I argue, thus becomes secondary to responsiveness to the desires of the capitalist subject. In other words, the worker's attentiveness towards a specific domestic space gets a deeper connection to being responsive to the employer by tapping into the desires of the person paying for domestic services. The second important link I want to highlight takes shape when employers exercise privileged irresponsibility by *not* actualizing their attentiveness towards dirt and transferring their responsibilities to the domain of a domestic worker, and while doing so, ignore the needs and desires of said worker as a human being. That is, when employers prioritize their own non-attentiveness *at the cost* of the worker – by being non-responsive to the domestic worker as a human being and ignoring the structural injustice within which their relationship is embedded.

Following on from my discussion of Jakob's extract above, it is pivotal to observe that the couples in my sample are not simply outsourcing a part of their domestic work as



such. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, what they are importantly outsourcing together with specific domestic chores is the potential conflict that arises between the partners concerning divergent – socialized – standards of cleanliness and the associated levels of attentiveness to dirt. Hence, we can say that what employers of domestic workers are willing to pay for is precisely the attentiveness of the domestic worker towards the required tasks that transform a specific domestic space into one in which its inhabitants can live well. This attentiveness is geared towards specific tasks, a specific space and the people living in that space. Attention – as a form of love – is a “resource” in demand in the global North. I understand my point here to be in line with Hochschild’s argument in *Love and Gold* (2002). Whereas imperialism was marked by the extraction of natural resources from the global South such as ivory, gold, and rubber (26) that was used to establish the economic flourishing of the “European miracle” (Mills 2008, 362), in the neocolonial age we witness a global transfer of attentiveness and love, an extraction of the resource of love with migrant workers servicing emotional labor needs in the global North. Hochschild calls this transfer a “global heart transplant” (Hochschild 2002, 22).

In their introduction to the anthology *Global Women. Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (2002) Barbara Ehrenreich and Hochschild condense some of the common themes running through the chapters of the book; they write:

The lifestyles of the First World are made possible by a global transfer of the services associated with a wife’s traditional role<sup>65</sup> – child care, homemaking, and sex – from poor countries to rich ones. [...] [W]omen who migrate from country to country to work as maids bring not only their muscle power but an attentiveness to detail and to the human relationships in the household that might otherwise have been invested in their own families. [...] It is as if the wealthy parts of the world are running short on

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<sup>65</sup> Historically, the same can be said for a racialized servant subject.

precious emotional and sexual resources and have had to turn to poorer regions for fresh supplies (Ehrenreich/Hochschild 2002, 4-5).

I subscribe to their point that what is bought in addition by the employers of domestic and care workers is attentiveness and love. The “resource” of love, Hochschild complicates her point, is not simply “extracted” and shipped in the same way a natural resource would be.<sup>66</sup> Rather it is “at least partially produced by the conditions under which it is given” (Hochschild 2002, 26). As Hochschild underlines, the love María Gutierrez, a woman from the Philippines caring for a baby in California, gives to the child is informed by both María’s specific background story in the Philippines, as well as “a postmodern ideology of mothering and childhood in the United States, and the loneliness of migration” (25), rather than a “natural product of her more loving Third World culture” (23), the “way some employers describe it” (ibid.).

Hochschild emphasizes another aspect of the care drain worth highlighting in the context of this chapter; she asserts: “the more we love and are loved, the more deeply we can love” (22). As with responsiveness that – I argued above – needs to be practiced to flourish, love is a “*renewable* resource; it creates more of itself” (23, italics in original). The global heart transplant Hochschild assesses, robs children in the migrant women’s countries of origin of that love and care for the benefit of the “affluent charges” the workers look after. Hochschild describes the ways these left behind children suffer as ranging from being more frequently ill, to being more likely to express anger, confusion, apathy and performing poorly at school to a rise in delinquency and child suicide that one study found (22). “Faced with these facts,” Hochschild assesses, “one senses some sort of injustice at work, linking the emotional deprivation of these children with the surfeit of

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<sup>66</sup> The extraction of natural resources though also involves the labor of workers.

affection their First World counterparts enjoy” (22). Hochschild declares love in this context “an unfairly distributed resource” (ibid.).

I see Hochschild’s claim of an unfair distribution of love and the disregard of the disadvantaged within this regime as connecting to Tronto’s notion of privileged irresponsibility and its relationship to my understanding of responsiveness.<sup>67</sup> “Those who have bought or presumed themselves free from their caring roles have engaged in a process I have called *privileged irresponsibility*” (Tronto 1999, 269-270, italics in original). Tronto argues that they are able to do so because “[p]rivileges of wealth or status have conferred upon them an opportunity to *ignore their* caring responsibilities” (270, italics added). Referring to the same passage from Tronto, Zembylas et al. note:

Where there is privileged irresponsibility, some groups of people are obliged to pay a lot of attention to their caring responsibilities, while others can afford to ignore these responsibilities, at the same time as taking for granted that their needs will be serviced (Zembylas et al. 2014, 208).

This is part of the larger frame within which the concrete relationships between employers and employees are located. I want to emphasize that power inequalities are *affectively present* even in the absence of one of the parties in the concrete space of one private household. In what follows, I claim that the alternative reading for the passage from Jakob’s interview above, of domestic workers’ inattentiveness as an act of resistance, is challenging the position of power that stands behind privileged irresponsibility.

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<sup>67</sup> Joan Tronto, and Berenice Fisher, also use the notions of attentiveness and responsiveness, in the discussion of four phases of care (Fisher/Tronto 1990; Tronto 1999, 268). Please note that my use of attentiveness and responsiveness here is somewhat different from theirs.

*Curdled Resistance and Dissociation from Employers*

The thin relationships between members of domestic work-outsourcing households and the migrant workers performing these services are not produced by the employers' choosing *only*. Even though domestic workers often experience disinterest in their person connected with the invisibility of their occupation on the part of the employers as hurtful (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 1; 2010, 164), minimal interaction in these "thin relationships" seems to be often welcome by many workers as well. This can be a simple preference for a professional distance as in any other day job, and especially in the private home. On the part of domestic workers, the reasoning behind a vested interest not to get too close – too familial – with their employers can also be coming from an entirely different direction, as the findings of MAIZ' study (2004) suggest. The concrete relations between employer and employee will vary, and be shaped by the particular individuals who are entering into relationships with each other. These relations are embedded within larger hierarchical structures, however, leaving employees in the structurally vulnerable positions. I thus argue that inattentiveness towards domestic chores and non-responsiveness towards the precariousness of the domestic worker's situation on the part of the employers will tend to come from a place of ignorance vested with privilege. For domestic workers on the other hand inattentiveness towards tasks and non-responsiveness towards their employers' wishes can be seen as resistance to the employers' power. It can be identified as a strategy to counter vulnerabilities. As curdle separation (Lugones 1994).

Analytically one can distinguish between two forms of resistance related to responsiveness on the part of domestic workers that are relevant for my aim here, even though in practice they will overlap and blur. First, workers' resistance to being too attentive to overly perfectionist ways in which chores are requested from employers. Second, resisting getting involved in relationships deemed too close to their employers.

Here, resisting attentiveness towards the work also means – by extension – resisting responsiveness to the outsourcing households for whom the work is performed. Resisting familial relationships with employers, again, might also involve resistance to being too attentive to the tasks they demand – which makes up part of the relationship with them.

The nature of the workplace in the private sphere and the feminized and racialized connotations of domestic work that is performed outside the legal frame of rights, and thus protections by the state, produces precarious working conditions for migrant domestic workers that are exacerbated for women with irregular legal status. Still, domestic workers find different strategies in the struggle to counter their structural vulnerabilities. Collins' discussion of stories Bonnie Thornton Dill (1988) shares of Black domestic worker's strategies in the U.S. of resisting employers who supervise their work too closely is an example of the first kind of resistance I have in mind. Challenging the rules governing their work without engaging in "overt political resistance" Collins reads domestic workers' strategies as both conservative and radical (1991, 143).

The findings of the qualitative study on housework and caretaking of migrant women in private households in Austria (MAIZ 2004)<sup>68</sup> conducted by the autonomous center for and by migrant women, MAIZ<sup>69</sup>, are instructive on this question. All of the domestic workers interviewed in MAIZ' study report they prefer to work without their employers present so that they can determine their workflow (47). This is to forestall situations similar to the one Jakob shared with me in the excerpt above in which he would show the domestic worker how to do a specific task (II Jakob, ln 1218). Mafalda from Ecuador – a domestic worker, interviewed in the MAIZ study – reports about her employer monitoring her: "When I was there for the first time, she timed how long I need to get

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<sup>68</sup> The research team for this study was: Luzenir Caixeta, Barbara Haas, Bettina Haidinger, Sonja Rappold, Daniela Rechling and Pamela Ripota.

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.maiz.at/en>

changed” (MAIZ 2004, 50, translation from German by the author). Her employer then deducted this from the time Mafalda worked.

The importance to *dissociate* at times from the employers is also shared by Ukrainian domestic workers interviewed by Bettina Haidinger (2013, 136). The structural problem of deskilling, Haidinger portrays in the migrant’s experiences in-between Austria and Ukraine, is often not countered by personal respect from the employer towards the workers (131). Respect vis-à-vis the domestic workers means to acknowledge her as a human person. Respect to honor the work contract – even if it is an informal one (ibid.). As Haidinger puts it, the “lack of respect on the part of the employers affects the whole person; not just the part of the person who is currently cleaning” (ibid., translation from German by the author). Individual domestic workers find different strategies to cope with the structural issue of lack of respect. The workers actively resist their degradation. Maria, one of the interviewees in Haidinger’s study, reports that she had to learn to work “without feeling” in this intimate workspace (ibid.). In order to counter her vulnerabilities and to protect emotional distance from her employers, Maria tries to have less affection, less understanding for them (ibid.).

When workers enter into familial relationships with their employers they often open themselves up to additional demands. Other kinds of feminized “labor of love,” (e.g. additional babysitting without extra pay) are harder to turn down once friendship-like relations muddle the work-relationship. Their professional ethos is more difficult to sustain for the workers as another realm of potential exploitation associated with the unpaid work expected from female “family/friendship” relations opens up (cf. Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010, 116; Haidinger 2013, 138). Something like this seems to be at work when Ilonka from Hungary says about her employer in Austria: “But she was so nice, so I couldn’t say I’m sorry, but that’s not okay with me” (MAIZ 2004, 48, translation from

German by the author). Thus, I suggest, domestic workers' resistance to entering close relationships with their employers can be seen as a strategy to counter the vulnerabilities related to their structural position. I read this kind of workers' resistance with Lugones' notion of curdle-separation. The domestic workers participate in and resist to the framework set up to dominate them simultaneously. Domestic workers in MAIZ' study also shared how they protect their privacy by not giving their employers much personal information at all as well as making up stories about themselves (2004, 49). Importantly, I am not purporting a general dislike of connectedness on the part of the domestic workers (if there was "the" domestic worker, with a generalizable opinion), and the central role of networks among female migrant workers as well as relationships to advocacy groups contradict such a verdict vehemently. Nedelsky draws attention to the fact that not the existence of a relationship, but rather its poor quality makes it problematic and may render it undesirable.

Lastly, a quote from Anna, a domestic worker from Poland cited in the same report by MAIZ, serves to highlight the discrepancy between the employers' attentiveness to their domestic space and the high attentiveness to cleanliness demanded from a domestic worker – as well as the affective dimension of the interactions.

The people demand from me to clean flawlessly, so everything is spotless... But how they live and how their apartment looks like before I start to clean! Sometimes I enter a room, I change my clothes, and then I cry (MAIZ 2004, 47, translation from German by the author).

### **Becoming Responsive to the (Positive) Potential of (Negative) Affects**

Coming back to the "other side" of these relations again – and thus to the participants in my study who outsource part of their domestic work to migrant workers – I found passages indicating how affects, such as guilt or shame, emerge for the employers situated

in these relationships of unequal power. I will discuss relevant extracts after bringing in Jennifer Nedelsky's example of homelessness as "suffering and often violence that urban North Americans have become accustomed to" (2011, 23).

Nedelsky depicts her first encounter with a homeless person and her shock about that person's situation as well as the apparent "casual disregard" of another academic present at the scene (23-24). Nedelsky elaborates that years later now, she too, is not shocked anymore when confronted with homeless people in Toronto. Yet, – and here she brings affects into the discussion – she is asking what it does to her, or to any passer-by, to see "such vivid examples of a lack of collective care, of the failure of multiple social institutions?" (23). This leads Nedelsky to the following relational reading of the matter:

I am not under any illusion that it does not harm me to participate in such harm. Even if I am not always conscious of it, I know that there is a direct relationship between my legally protected right to exclude even a cold and hungry person from my home and that person being on the street. If she and I did not both assume my right to exclude, she would not be out in the cold. As is often the case with property rights, there is no need for me to call the police, to make manifest the way my property is backed by the power of the state, for me to exercise the power my property provides. My right to exclude creates an asymmetrical relation of power and advantage between me and the homeless person, and it creates a relation of responsibility – in this case, an absence of (legal) responsibility on my part for her immediate well-being. I can hurry by secure in the knowledge that I have violated no rights of hers and thus remain under the illusion that my entitlements are in no way responsible for her predicament (2011, 24).

Nedelsky argues that this illusion can only provide the "protection" to permit one not to think about the issue. Trying to "insulate" ourselves from both responsibility and vulnerability it will still affect us. In ignoring the relation, we cut through our social



bonds; we try to become non-responsive to the plight that is then not ours. The illusion that we are independent of the homeless person is based on – to use my terms – a form of ignorance, or non-responsiveness that does not quite solve the problem of our consciousness. “We live with a sense of shame, vulnerability, and insecurity, with a sense of being enmeshed in some kind of failed set of social institutions and relations” (24). What is more, these feelings of either “shame or the insecurity of participating in this collective failure of responsibility” can, when repressed, transform into “contempt or fear of the homeless,” or general feelings of “inchoate anxiety and insecurity” (24).

The example again serves to point towards the denial of existing connections that is implicated in the creation of the “illusion of containment” (Brennan 2000, 50), that involves asymmetrical power relations. Moreover, with Nedelsky’s example of the relationship with the homeless person, I want to underscore that what we see, do not see or try not to see as connected to us, that is: towards what (relations) we are becoming responsive, is socialized through embodied practice – learned. This also holds for larger patterns of ignorance and inequality. These structures often *seem* terribly stable. This does not mean they cannot be changed. To the contrary, I claim that emphasizing how exactly they are *made* and remade, in often quite small and ordinary activities, as well as pointing toward the residues of affects that mark instances in which our illusions cannot be contained, where there is affective “spill-over,” highlights the changeability of structures and makes tangible the potentials for transformation.

I used both Tronto’s example of “privilege” as blocking the sight to notice the needs of others, at the start of this chapter, as well as Nedelsky’s reference to the homeless person that one is in their legal right to exclude, to elaborate how I take asymmetrical power structures to be connected to responsiveness and ignorance. In the remainder of this

chapter, I will draw on my empirical data to elaborate how certain, “negative” affects emerge through the power hierarchies that are the backdrop to the (non)responsive face-to-face encounters within private households that pay for domestic services; and I will suggest a reading of such instances that can decipher potentials for transformation.

*“... then I almost always have a guilty conscience.” Affective Responses to an Epistemology of Separation.*

Three couples in my sample have become parents in the last two years. For heterosexual couples, the phase after the birth of the first child is often a phase of “traditionalisation” of gender performances (Koppetsch/Burkhart 1999). All of the three men in my sample who have recently become fathers have already taken parental leave at the time of the interviews or were about to start their leave; although they took significantly shorter leaves than their female partners.<sup>70</sup> In contrast to the men in my sample though, only 5% of the total number of recipients of childcare benefits in Austria in 2011 were men (report to the European Commission on “The Role of Men in Gender Equality” 2013, 252).

In the following passage Frances, one of the young mothers in my sample, seems to perceive the need to justify that her household still employs a domestic worker – now, that she is at home; thereby making domestic work her responsibility. Frances explains that she tries to leave her home for at least half of the time that the woman works there, to give her some space as well. According to Frances, her domestic worker Barbara, “also can’t work properly” (II Frances, ln 250) if she was present; and it would be “a difficult situation” (ln 251) for Barbara, now that Frances and the baby are around. Asked if it was also uncomfortable for her, she replies:

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<sup>70</sup> The men were on leave for 2-3 months, their female partners for about one year each.

Frances: Yeah, I mean, naturally it isn't super comfortable for me either, because I mean- I obviously am doing things, it is not like I am lazily laying in a hammock, while she's drudging, but uh- Uh, I'm taking care of [my child], but somehow one still has got a weird feeling (smiles), still, uh- That someone is cleaning your apartment, while you're actually also at home, yes? And then one has to tell oneself: No, I earned this because I do so many other things... (II Frances, ln 314-320)

The extract from Frances' interview shows the complexity of the assignment of entitlements and responsibilities in the domestic arena. Frances sees the need to explain herself and to rationalize that she is not in charge of (this part of) feminized labor within her household. She "has to tell [her]self: No, I earned this."

Asked to tell me what their domestic worker does exactly in their household, Frances starts by telling me about the frequency that Barbara works for them. Barbara comes once a week for four hours,

Frances: Except for when we're on extended holidays or something. Then I do tell her that she doesn't necessarily have to come- because naturally then there's also nothing to do, right? Although then I almost always have a *guilty conscience*, because I think- Yes, she's counting on getting the money for the three weeks that we're on holidays- But I mean, if there's nothing to do then there's nothing to do (II France, ln 375-379, my emphasis).

Frances' implicit knowledge of the precarious working conditions of Barbara leads her to the bodily sensation of an affect that can be described as a "guilty conscience." Still, she rationalizes that "if there's nothing to do then there's nothing to do." This is the way that most people outsourcing domestic cleaning in the informal sector in Austria handle their vacation times; it corresponds with MAIZ' study's results, in which domestic workers

reported not being paid during the time their employers are on vacation, which can lead to severe crises for the workers who face dire challenges to their subsistence during the summer months (MAIZ 2004, 50). The informal employer-employee relationship is exclusively centred on the needs of the employers; if they do not require the services of a domestic worker while they are away on holidays, then why should they pay for them?

To add nuance to my point let me draw on Niall Hanlon (2012), who underlines that affective responses of feeling guilty for not doing (enough) reproductive labor are themselves gendered. “The moral imperative on women to care means women carry a disproportionate burden of guilt when they choose other interests over caring” (39). Thus, I would describe Frances’ affective response of guilt regarding Barbara’s precarious position as interwoven with the gendered social norms assigning to women the performance of (disproportionate amounts of) reproductive work.

And, the narratives of many employers, I would argue, follow neoliberal market rationale. About ten years ago one of the largest home technology and entertainment retailers in Austria coined the marketing slogan “Geiz ist geil” (stinginess is awesome). According to this logic, the consumer who pays more for a product or service than necessary is “stupid.”<sup>71</sup> I read slogans like these as a capitalist response to the growing awareness of consumers that to be sold at “unbeatable” prices many goods that we daily consume are indeed produced under unethical, even inhumane, conditions. To say that “Geiz ist geil” is to try and nip this growing consciousness in the bud. To pay more than the “unbeatable” price then becomes not only rehabilitated from the social stigma of not being able to afford something more expensive, it is transformed into a desirable ideal. This becomes especially insulting in a context in which the number of those who cannot

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<sup>71</sup> The promotional slogan of the competing enterprise that came out as a response to “stinginess is awesome,” was “I ain’t stupid, man” (Ich bin doch nicht blöd, Mann).

cover their basic needs and are at risk of poverty is growing in Austria,<sup>72</sup> and other countries in the capitalist West. In the context of domestic cleaning, the precarious working and living conditions of the domestic workers become suspended and legitimated as secondary; as feminized and racialized/ethnicized labor that is how most people treat it.

### *The Potentiality of Affective “Spill-Over”*

I want to suggest reading affective responses – such as guilt in the extract above – that emerge in the encounter between members of outsourcing households and domestic workers in contexts of unequal relations of power, as *potential* openings towards transformation.<sup>73</sup> They clearly mark that something is not right. Rationally, most employers uphold an epistemology of separation that strengthens a narrative of a domestic worker who is separate to them, who enters this work by her own choosing, whom they might even be “helping” by giving her this work. This narrative does not leave much room to account for the unequal terms on which outsourcers and domestic workers are entering these relationships and the larger unjust structures within which they both are embedded. Affectively yet, I argue, there is a spill-over – affects and emotions and corporeal reactions cannot be contained by the narrative of independence and come to the fore as feelings of a guilty conscience, or simply discomfort with the bodily presence of the worker. Zembylas et al. (2014) perceive Tronto’s political ethics of care to make tangible the “difficult” emotional knowledge “arising from practices of privileged irresponsibility” (201). This difficult emotional knowledge involves “feelings of moral

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<sup>72</sup> In 2014, 19.2% of the Austrian population were at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion; cf. the website of Statistics Austria: [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_en/statistics/PeopleSociety/social\\_statistics/poverty\\_and\\_social\\_inclusion/index.html](http://www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/PeopleSociety/social_statistics/poverty_and_social_inclusion/index.html), Last accessed the 24. 01. 2016

cf. the website of the Austrian Anti Poverty Network (Die Armutskonferenz): <http://www.armutskonferenz.at>, Last accessed the 24. 01. 2016

<sup>73</sup> I want to thank Magdalena Żółkoś for pointing me into the direction of this reading.

indignation when caregivers are treated unjustly or inhumanely; or emotions of guilt and shame when care-receivers realize that they have been engaging in privileged irresponsibility” (201).

A constructive reading of guilt and shame could take those feelings serious in highlighting a potential path; an opening towards transformation. Understanding affects, as “slower-motion residues of the original connection between thought and substance” (Brennan 2000, 67), they act here as reminders of a connection that goes beyond the clear-cut non-relationality strengthened by an epistemology of separation.

Continual processes that *block* the potential openings marked by affective responses are required, in order to recreate and perpetuate the ignorant status quo. When Frances says, “Although then I almost always have a guilty conscience because I think- Yes, she’s counting on getting the money for the three weeks that we’re on holidays-” she is responsive to Barbara’s (precarious) position and her own responsibility growing out of her interconnectedness with the domestic worker. With her next sentence: “But I mean, if there’s nothing to do then there’s nothing to do,” Frances turns away from the affective and rationalizes her previous stance; this second turn is a turn away from Barbara that cuts through their joint social bond and creates not only distance but ignorance as privileged irresponsibility. I agree with Zembylas et al. (2014) that we might need a different, potentially productive understanding of shame, to address the paralysing aspects of guilt and shame (208).

Writing from a background in critical pedagogies, Zembylas et al. discuss how societal institutions often seek to eradicate shame “via an erasure of histories of privileged irresponsibility and the sanitisation of wounds inflicted on marginalised groups” (2014, 208). Zembylas et al. are thinking about ways to go beyond the “paralysing and

unproductive effects” (208) – what I have called “blocking” the potential openings marked by guilt and shame.

A productive engagement with shame and guilt, for instance, would be one that urges those who recognise the exercise of privileged irresponsibility to use those emotions as points of departure for critical reflection and renewed action towards relational responsibility and attentiveness (208).

I see this perception of shame and guilt as starting point for action, in line with Young’s model of relational, shared responsibility (2006).

Let me again emphasize the affective openings I have described in this section. Together with the practices of attentiveness and responsiveness that I elaborate in Chapter 6, I perceive these as holding potentials for transformation to be amplified. In this chapter, I have discussed how privileged irresponsibility is indicative of the unequal power relations, within which it emerges. The hierarchical power system I refer to here is sustained by a framework of binary, hierarchical oppositions – an epistemology of separation, based on a strong subject/object split. Within such an “ignorant” epistemology, interconnectedness and the transmission of affects drop out of sight. I have retraced how objectification based in abjection works to devalue reproductive labor and make invisible the domestic workers. I have also elaborated how the devaluation of corporeality, triggered by the Cartesian split, is tied into the low worth ascribed to domestic work as bodywork. In the next chapter, I will emphasize that what I am concerned with here is not personal shortcomings, but *structural* non-responsiveness. I will do so by connecting the question of permeability to the literature on epistemic ignorance.





# 5

## (Semi)permeable Membranes of Interconnection and Epistemic Ignorance

I begin this chapter with a quote from Melissa Lucashenko, a Goorie writer, on Australia's "broken ear," to open my analysis of permeability, responsiveness, and epistemic ignorance. The passage is taken from a panel discussion on "The F Word: Aboriginality" that was organized by the Wheeler Centre and recorded in September 2015 in Melbourne, Australia.

There is a phrase in Bundjalung which is "Binan Goonj." Binan Goonj. Binan means ear and Goonj means broken. And it's the experience of most Aboriginal women I know that- The capacity of mainstream Australia to listen, and really listen – not just stop talking while we talk and then start talking again – is really limited [...] It's frustrating not just because the Aboriginal women's experience doesn't get to be voiced and understood; but because the whole debate then can't go to a more sophisticated level. You know, there has been 60- or 80 000 years of feminism here. There has been 60- or 80 000 years of people working out how to live respectfully

together. There has been 60- or 80 000 years of women raising families, and being economic managers, and being religious leaders, and doing all the kinds of things that we would want to do today. And it's a matter of mainstream Australia actually understanding that there is stuff that they can learn from us. Not extend a helping hand to lift us up to your level but to actually shut up long enough to understand that there are things that you're ignorant about; that there is wisdom and leadership in Aboriginal women and in Aboriginal men that can benefit the whole country (Lucashenko speaking at The F Word: Aboriginality, September 2015).<sup>74</sup>

Talking to the *broken ear* of “mainstream” Australia, Lucashenko highlights what is at stake when the dominant part of society is *hearing but not really listening*. Or, more apt to my examples, we could say *able to see but looking the other way*. As I read the above quote, Lucashenko is calling for a commitment on the part of “mainstream Australia” to become responsive towards the richness of Aboriginal knowledge and wisdom that it seems incompetent to see because the access to it is blocked – by epistemic ignorance. I read Lucashenko’s description of Binan Goonj as a form of “testimonial quieting” (Dotson 2011). Australia’s “broken ear” is a practice of epistemic violence in testimony on the part of “mainstream” Australia, “a refusal, intentional or unintentional, of an audience to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange owing to pernicious ignorance” (Dotson 2011, 238). Drawing on the definition of Kristie Dotson, the ignorance is pernicious and not a mere lack of knowledge, as it has harmful consequences and is reliable (ibid.). It is part of a specific pattern, in which “an agent will *consistently* fail to track certain truths” (241, italics added).

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<sup>74</sup> A video of the talk can be found at <http://www.wheelercentre.com/broadcasts/the-f-word-aboriginality> with the quoted passage starting at around 27:40 min, Last accessed the 25. 11. 2015

In this chapter I trace some *consistent* failures to be responsive, where people *typically* go wrong in regard to my focus on the domestic sphere. I argue that what is (actively) not perceived, or ignored, relating to domestic work and its outsourcing must not be seen as accidental, and innocent, but as embedded within specific epistemic structures. The notion of permeability is helpful here. I use this concept to denote who is seen, or remains invisible; what is heard, but not really listened to; what is let through, and what is blocked. I will discuss permeability, first, and more abstractly, by elaborating on human skin. Second, concretely, with the gendered notion of *Schmutztoleranz* (“dirt tolerance”). I will draw on the literature on epistemic ignorance, as well as my empirical data, to illuminate how epistemic ignorance works in the outsourcing of domestic labor that *structurally* marginalizes migrant workers and privileges the location of members of outsourcing households. And, drawing on feminist and social epistemologies I will show how societal relations of oppression lead to an epistemic landscape in which the dominant groups will, in many regards, be *epistemically disadvantaged*.

Maintaining that the social location of a subject matters epistemologically, I am basing my argument on standpoint theory and feminist epistemologies (cf. Collins 1991; Code 1993; Harding 1991, 1993;). This is not to say that our specific location in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, class, or sexuality “determines” what we can and do know. Rather it is to illustrate how knowing at a particular location of any agent – be it a female migrant domestic worker or a white middle class man outsourcing domestic services to said worker – is shaped at the intersection of a host of embodied experiences affected by broader societal relations of sexism, racism, and economic structures, to mention but a few. We are not free-floating agents and independent knowers. We are situated, context-bound, interdependent, relational, embodied individuals, who make sense of ourselves,

and our worlds, within a specific context. Our contextual individual and collective practices, in turn, are affecting the webs within which we are located.

This chapter is about bringing the question of permeability together with epistemic power *structures*. Connecting (ontological) permeability, as a truer description of the self and as a critique of individualism, and (normative) responsiveness with epistemic ignorance, my approach will be to focus on individual interactions that interlink with structures of larger scales. The main empirical focus within this chapter is on the gendered phenomenon of Schmutztoleranz, illustrating an interlinkage of inattentiveness to dirt and certain, dominant, notions of masculinity. I discussed racialization and the coloniality of labor, as important dimensions of the relationships within the outsourcing of domestic cleaning in the introduction. There cannot, however, be a clear cut between the discussions relating to gender and race. Starting from an intersectional viewpoint, I perceive configurations of gender as inseparable from coloniality, racialization, and ethnic stereotyping; various axes informing differentiation always create distinct positions in their specific entanglement in a concrete context.

The notion of “semipermeable membranes” that I put forward is essentially a thinking together of a concept of relational, affective and “affectable” – permeable, not bounded – selves, with the idea that individuals are not arbitrarily responsive to connection; what our – here metaphorical – valves or pores let pass through is structured by patterns that go beyond individual selves. In my notion of semipermeable membranes, permeability, which could be understood as pertaining to the condition of *individual* selves only, is hence located in a *collective* context. I understand the concept of epistemic ignorance as part of a critique of societal relations of racism, sexism and other systems of oppression. This is in line with Charles Mills’ assertion that

[f]or a social epistemology, where the focus is on supra-individual processes, and the individual's interaction with them, the aim is to understand how certain social structures tend to promote these crucially flawed processes, how to personally extricate oneself from them (insofar as that is possible), and to do one's part in undermining them in the broader cognitive sphere. So the idea is that there are *typical ways of going wrong* that need to be adverted to in light of the social structure and specific group characteristics, and one has a better chance of getting things right through a self-conscious recognition of their existence, and corresponding self-distancing from them (Mills 2007, 23, italics added).

Epistemic ignorance is not an individualized phenomenon; it always refers to *structural* relations of domination and oppression. I use the concept of semipermeable membranes as an epistemic tool to theorize ontological permeability and normative responsiveness within a structural, political realm. There are non-accidental epistemic choreographies at work: ways in which the openings and closures in the responsiveness of an individual self are also importantly governed by societal structures. This is how I perceive epistemic ignorance to be structuring responsiveness and perception and producing *particular* kinds of *semipermeable* membranes of individuals and collectives in the field of domestic outsourcing. I thus use the ontological assumption of human permeability that stands against the ideology of the bounded self in tandem with an ethical commitment to responsiveness in order to shed light on the unjust and untenable situation of outsourcing domestic work in the global North.

Attentiveness and responsiveness to the mundane forms of connectivity in practice are required, I argue, in order to develop individual and collective practices of responsibility, and responsible structures. In Chapter 6 I will illustrate in more detail the potentials for the kind of transformative politics I have in mind.

In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss concepts of skin. This is to elaborate how I see permeability as relevant for my analysis of the outsourcing of domestic work. With the idea of skin as a connecting element rather than a separating wall, I shift the focus to the connective tissue itself – rather than the elements that are related through it. Thus, I foreground relations and their quality to affect those related. For this section, I draw on arguments developed by Magdalena Żółkoś and Catherine Keller. I then discuss the connecting as well as potentially fragmenting aspects of vision by examining seeing and looking back in work by Donna Haraway and Teresa Brennan. Drawing on feminist epistemologies and standpoint theory, I will finally arrive at an elaboration of my epistemic notion of semipermeable membranes that connects the ideology of non-permeability (that is the belief in the myth of independence and a strong subject/object split) with the non-accidental structures of non-responsiveness.

In the second part of the chapter, I will introduce the concept of the “Schmutztoleranzgrenze” – in English, “dirt-tolerance limit.” Some participants in my empirical study in Vienna created this neologism to describe the threshold up to which someone could “tolerate” dirt. The notion is used to indicate if somebody can “ignore” dirt, and the threshold of becoming responsive to the matter itself, or the – socially mediated – calls to act and clean dirt away. Drawing on theoretical work on epistemic ignorance and on my own empirical data, I will argue that different levels of Schmutztoleranz are connected to specific patterns of (non)responsiveness; I will read the notion of tolerance of dirt as emerging out of (gendered) inattentiveness, and privileged non-responsiveness to connection. Here I bring in the question of perception and consequently epistemology; the notion of differential Schmutztoleranz, in my reading, is an epistemic category.

I maintain that the concept of semipermeable membranes is a thinking together of ontological permeability and responsiveness respectively non-responsiveness that is socially produced. Practices of non-responsiveness connect permeability and active “unknowing,” that is epistemic ignorance. The notion of semipermeable membranes is thus an epistemic category. The specific semipermeable membrane I will primarily focus on in the second part of this chapter is the gendered epistemic category of *Schmutztoleranz*. This gendered phenomenon of epistemic *Schmutztoleranz* leads me the following questions: How is inattentiveness towards a dirty home environment gendered in specific ways? How are the “Grenzen” (borders, thresholds) of “*Schmutztoleranz*” (dirt tolerance) socially produced? How are openings blocked? How are connections and disconnections shaped by patterns of ignorance and irresponsibility that go beyond individuals?

As I explained in Chapter 4, I distinguish between attentiveness to dirt and responsiveness to a domestic worker, which are not the same thing. They can critically overlap in practices of privileged irresponsibility; that is when a subject uses his or her structurally privileged position to relegate domestic work to a marginalized other while ignoring the cost of that burdening for this other person. I take epistemic ignorance as central in the continual making of privileged irresponsibility – in this case, the “privilege” not to care. For me, this kind of privilege is at the heart of contemporary unequal relations of social reproduction.

### **Structuring the Permeable**

Oceanic worldviews traditionally understand Pacific islands as nodal points within a network connected by waterways. Contrary to the prevailing outlook in the West that perceives a “lonely island” as separated by the sea, the dominant paradigm for oceanic

peoples – with a rich history of seafaring and navigation – tends to see water as a connecting rather than an isolating element. Rather than “islands in a far sea” Oceania should thus be read as “a sea of islands” (cf. Hau'ofa 1993). These divergent readings of the sea, as designating a border in one case and being a medium of connectivity in the other, are analogous to two different possible ways of seeing human skin.

### *Skin as Contact-Zone*

I draw on an understanding of skin as membrane and thus also medium of connectivity, to focus on *relations between* the human actors in outsourcing. An outlook that starts from the relations between these people – as nodal points – centers on the (unequal) relations of interdependence between them; that is, on their connectedness through semipermeable membranes. I put forward this perspective to understand *collective* patterns of non-responsiveness – and ignorance – that permeate a *system*, rather than lingering on the individual “failures” of subjects.

Within the dominant paradigm in the West, skin is usually seen as the border demarcating the individual self as distinct and separate from its environment. Skin is the structure that bounds the self that maps onto and is identical with the physical space of one human body, covered with this cutaneous fabric. Nedelsky illustrates the dominant model in the following quote: “we are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins” (Lakoff/Johnson 1980, quoted in Nedelsky 2011, 110). I want to emphasize that although skin *does* function as a boundary in some ways, it is also in many ways a connecting element. Again, my argument is that skin is *both, separating and connecting*. Its function in interconnecting tends not to be seen. We take “the dominant notion of selfhood [...] that of the ‘separative self’ [...] so much for granted that our boundedness seems natural and essential” (Nedelsky 2011, 110). This



point is important for my argument: the notion of the bounded self that denies relationality makes responsible practices towards those to whom we are connected more difficult.

It is in fact common knowledge in the West that our skin is permeable<sup>75</sup>. We know that humans breathe through our skin; that we sweat; that we smell perspiration of strong scents such as alcohol off other people through their skin. Everyday experiences like these are exemplary evidence that we are not sealed off, but more fluid and in contact with “the other side” of our epidermis, connecting through our skin. Thus we can understand skin as *both* differentiating individual selves “from” the outside world *and* in many ways connecting us “to” this world. The image of the skin as a membrane makes visible how we are continuous with and affected by our surroundings. Nedelsky borrows from Catherine Keller’s image of the skin that is very different from the picture of a separating boundary.

Our skin does not separate – it connects us to the world through a wondrous network of sensory awareness.... Through my senses I go into the world, and the world comes into me. It is precisely in embodiment that the many are becoming one and the outer becoming inner (Keller 1986, quoted in Nedelsky 2011, 110).

Contemporary affect theory is in line with this image of skin. Affect theory “proposes a notion of the subject that is porous and permeable in various modalities of ecological exposure” (Żółkoś 2016, 78). Magdalena Żółkoś (2016) argues that the permeable subject

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<sup>75</sup> Since different ideas of the human body are socially and culturally constructed, they are also changeable over time. Ben Campkin and Rosie Cox refer to the work of historian Georges Vigarello, who argues for understanding notions of cleanliness as interrelated with historical notions of the human body. In the sixteenth century, the human body was perceived to contain humours and be permeable to heat and water. This led to the common assessment of bathing as a dangerous practice (Campkin/Cox 2012, 2; cf. Vigarello 1998).

Also cf. work on the female body and its “leakiness” as unstable, contaminating, messy and unbounded; e.g. Margrit Shildrick (1997) *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries*.

mobilized in affect theory is part of a critique of the ideology of an autonomous and self-bounded subjectivity, and that it is aimed at undermining the self/other dichotomy dominant in Western philosophy. Żółkoś (2014) illustrates this through a critique of Charles Taylor's (2007) conceptual analysis of the modern buffered versus the premodern porous self. While she finds Taylor's analysis insightful and persuasive, Żółkoś suggests "that the chronological binary of these two modalities of subject formation overlooks ways in which porousness as a subjective constitution is drawn upon in the various attempts at critiquing Western secularism" (2014, 3). Rather than using "porousness" as "defining such subjectivities and sensibilities that are incommensurable with the project of the modern self" Żółkoś argues for an understanding of it as "example of a counter-logic to discourses of subject autonomy that can, potentially, corrode liberalism's investment in the idea of the 'invulnerable self' in relation to its spiritual and material ecologies" (3).

Żółkoś (2016) paraphrases Teresa Brennan's argument in *Exhausting Modernity* (2000) of affective transmission as literal, not metaphorical "a *penetration of cutaneous surfaces of the body by particles*" (Żółkoś 2016, 80, italics in original). Żółkoś argues that it "is precisely this membranous image of the skin as a subjective boundary that allows for the transmission of certain constituents and for retention of other constituents, that lies at the heart of the socio-biological imaginary of the subject produced within affect theory" (Żółkoś 2016, 80). For Brennan, the taken-for-grantedness of affective containment "is a residual bastion of Eurocentrism in critical thinking" (Brennan 2004, 2). Quoting from Brennan (2004), Żółkoś asserts:

The individualist view that "emotions and energies are naturally contained, *going no further than the skin*," which denies "the affective impact of the (social and maternal) environment" (pp. 2, 73) in turn relies on, and produces, strong dichotomies of subject and object, individual and the

environment, and, Brennan posits (p. 7), “the related opposition between the biological and the social” (2016, 79-80, quoting Brennan 2004, italics added).

Our senses – of smell, sight, hearing, taste, and touch – are connecting capacities. The surfaces of our bodies are permeated through these capabilities, by which humans engage with their environment and structure our practices in a specific locality. As in any human interaction, these senses are also the means through which employers and employees in the field of the outsourcing of domestic work connect with each other in the contact zones of the private households where they engage with and are affected by each other. For the scope of this chapter, I will focus on touch and vision<sup>76</sup> and discuss how we use our senses in particular ways.

### *The (Semi)Permeable Dimension of Human Visual and Haptic Senses*

Writing on human-nonhuman interaction, Donna Haraway emphasizes the embodied, embedded nature of responsibility:

My premise is that touch ramifies and shapes accountability. Accountability, caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions; these mundane, prosaic things are the result of having truck with each other. Touch does not make one small; it peppers its partners with attachment sites for world making. Touch, regard, looking back, becoming with – all these make us responsible in unpredictable ways for which worlds take shape. In touch and regard, partners willy nilly are in the miscegenous mud that infuses our bodies with all that brought that

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<sup>76</sup> In her 1996 text ‘*The Contexts of Vision*’ from a *Specific Standpoint*, Brennan traces the historic engagement with the question of whether eyes were receivers or emitters, and discusses the theory of *extramission* – or “light from the eyes” (220) – in which the senses of touch and vision interlink in a specific way.

contact into being. Touch and regard have consequences (Haraway 2008, 36).

Haraway underlines that touch, regard, and looking back are practices with relational potentials. In their performance, we create social bonds. “Touch does not make one small” (36), precisely because of its suitability to function relationally, making connections tangible. Touch presumes at least two parties that connect through this embodied practice. Metaphorically, through being “in touch” with what is around us, and via being in meaningful relations, we avoid feeling small, and experience ourselves as connected, as expanded – even big (cf. Weir 2013, 57; Collins 1991, 149; cf. Low 2003).

Turning to the sense of sight, Teresa Brennan’s elaboration on the dialectics of the emotion of envy is of interest. Brennan traces the term’s etymological origin to the Latin word *videre*, which signals a relationship with visualization. And, she claims, envy does in fact work at the level of images – the terms of envy being “those of possessions, things, appearances, discrete entities, separable and separate from an ongoing process” (2000, 29). Brennan discusses this in a passage on the deconstruction of what she calls the foundational fantasy (in the modern West), drawing heavily on psychoanalytic theories. She sets up her argument in the infant’s fantasmatic reversal of reality to be in control of its mother’s breast, instead of being dependent upon it. Brennan elaborates that at the bottom of this lies a fantasy in which direction or agency is split from activity. That is, the idea and the process, or performance, are decoupled, leaving the former as mindful and the latter, paradoxically, as something void of intelligence. “What matters is the appearance of the thing, rather than the process of which it is part” (28). Brennan argues – and this brings us back to Haraway’s relational claims – that the “fantasy of controlling the breast cannot survive at the level of feeling (pain or pleasure); it can survive at the literally imaginary level of hallucination” (29). It is astounding that the mother’s breast

can come to function in this hallucination as an image of separation, and not as – literally – a connecting part between a child and its mother. Leaving aside the specificity of that interpretation, I want to delineate how Brennan’s analysis is of importance to my larger argument: Brennan explicitly points to the fact that the hallucination of the infant could not possibly be sustained “at the level of feeling (pain or pleasure)” (29). The image becomes a hallucination *because* the nascent subject prioritizes “its own visual capacity for imagination over its other senses.” This visual capacity, that “allows one to imagine things other than they are” (29), makes it possible to stress “the distinctiveness of entities other than oneself, rather than the senses or feelings that connect one with those others; it is this capacity that enables the subject to believe in (and even achieve) a situation where mental design and direction can be divorced from bodily action” (29-30). Thus if the child is to perceive separation and not connection between mother and child, what the child sees has to be lifted out of the corporeal experience that is interwoven with other senses such as touch or smell and placed into the visually dependent realm of imagination. Only in this realm can the image of the mother’s breast be integrated into an omnipotent hallucination in which it is controlled by the infant’s mind, and in which the fantasy is *disconnected* from reality.

Let me now contextualize this treatment of *videre* that can lead to a separation between the facts and their fantasmatic reversal of the original state of affairs by returning to Haraway and her discussion of *respecere*. “Looking back in this way,” Haraway asserts,

takes us to seeing again, to *respecere*, to the act of respect. To hold in regard, to respond, to look back reciprocally, to notice, to pay attention, to have courteous regards for, to esteem: all of that is tied to polite greeting, to constituting the polis, where and when species meet (Haraway 2008, 19).

In Haraway's relational understanding we are again dealing with the visual sense, yet on a different, ethical, register. Here the look is not directed at a breast as an object, but into the face of an embodied other in an ethical way that calls upon us to respond. That is, the sense of sight is not used in a way that disassembles and distorts the other, in so far as it turns the other into an object, but instead changes the self via the performance of a response that comes into being in connection with the other. The emphasis here then is not on the different entities themselves, that is, the mother('s breast) and/versus the child, but instead on the social interaction of looking back that connects these unique individuals; the emphasis is on the *relation between* them that emerges through the practice, and the quality of the relation.

Let me now suggest how this affective/corporeal/ethical-connex is of importance for our epistemic practices.

### *Situated Knowers in Domestic Spaces*

Social and feminist epistemologists have argued against the notion of the supposedly universal, independent cognizer in dominant epistemology. They put more emphasis on the relations between knowers, on the specificities of social locations, the implications of group identities and the importance of epistemic communities in the process of cognition. Feminist epistemologists have shown "that the ideals of the autonomous reasoner – the dislocated, disinterested observer – and the epistemologies they inform are the artifacts of a small, privileged group of educated, usually prosperous, white men" (Code 1993, 21). Rather than embodying a "view from nowhere," the ideal of *objectivity* within mainstream epistemologies is thus "a generalization from the *subjectivity* of a quite small social group" (22, italics in original). Lorraine Code thus argues that "[o]bjectivity *requires* taking subjectivity into account" (32, italics in original).

I take my cue here from a passage in Code's *Taking Subjectivity Into Account* (1993), in which she argues that "knowing other people in personal relationships is at least as worthy a contender as knowledge of everyday objects" (32). Yet, it is the latter that have become the standard "obvious candidates" for knowledge claims. Code maintains that,

Developmentally, learning what she or he can expect of other people is one of the first and most essential kinds of knowledge a child acquires. She or he learns to respond *cognitively* to the people who are a vital part of and provide access to her or his environment *long before* she or he can recognize the simplest physical objects (32, italics in original).

Code emphasizes the importance of *sensory and emotional* aspects in this relational development of cognitive agency,<sup>77</sup> and that a child's success in making sense of the world "is intrinsically linked with her or his caregivers' construction of the environment" (33). To highlight the role of affects and emotions in the cognitive processes that epistemology is concerned with (cf. S. Mohanty 1993), clashes with mainstream epistemology in which feeling and thought are taken to be oppositional (Collins 1991, 69).

Patricia Hill Collins' conceptualization of an Afrocentric feminist epistemology, which I elaborated in Chapter 4, is of importance here. Maintaining that Black women have access to both an Afrocentric tradition, and to a women's standpoint (Collins 1991, 206), Collins argues that the conceptual orientation of a Black women's standpoint is grounded in Black women's experiences of "being simultaneously a member of a group and yet standing apart from it" (207). Collins conceives the alternative epistemology she retraces in *Black Feminist Thought* as challenging the validity of the dominant model (219). Let me summarize four key features of an *epistemology of connection* in which "truth

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<sup>77</sup> Also cf. Cynthia Willett on "affect attunement" (2012).

emerges through care” (217). First, experience is a criterion of meaning (208), with value being placed on the epistemological significance of the concrete (209). Second, there is a belief in connectedness and the use of dialogue in accessing knowledge claims (212). Third, involving an ethic of caring, personal expressiveness, emotions and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process. Finally, personal accountability for knowledge claims is expected (217).

Let me connect these claims to an earlier passage in *Black Feminist Thought*, where Collins refers to Black women singing the Blues. Drawing on Michele Russell’s (1982) analysis, Collins argues that the content of the texts, as well as the form of delivery, make them unique expressions of a Black women’s standpoint, on which an Afrocentric feminist epistemology builds. Collins remarks that

[t]he songs themselves were originally sung in small communities, where *boundaries distinguishing* singer from audience, call from response, and thought from action were *fluid and permeable* (Collins 1991, 100, italics added).

Importantly, these fluidity and permeability do not imply a “dissolution” of individual selves; to the contrary, Collins argues that individual uniqueness flourishes in such a group-context.

Thus far I have highlighted how permeability structures human relations. Using the notion of skin, as well as human visual and haptic senses, I have illustrated how we socially make sense of, and conceive of permeability. In the last section I started to introduce non-dominant approaches in epistemology. In these alternative models, relationality – including affective relations, and emotions –, and ethical commitments play an important part in knowledge formation processes. Collins’ above quote illustrates my argument running through this chapter: I claim that how we conceive the permeable



(as our ontological condition), and how we structure our “contact zones” (including responsiveness), has epistemic consequences.

In the next section, I will emphasize how different kinds of knowledge that are invisible under the dominant paradigm of epistemology are relevant for the question of outsourcing domestic and care work. Some kinds of knowledge cannot be accessed on a merely cognitive level. Again, feminist and social epistemologies are helpful for me to highlight what is at stake if particular groups of people shun domestic work. My main argument here is that the unequal distribution of reproductive work leads to a specific pattern of epistemic ignorance, which, in turn, aids the reproduction of unequal power relations (and become breeding ground for further ignorance and irresponsibility).

#### *The Relevance of Knowing How and Experiential Knowledge*

Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Martín Alcoff (1993) argue that “traditional epistemology [is] underplaying the significance of practice for knowledge” (235). They argue that there are different kinds of knowledge that are not reducible to the standard formula of propositional knowledge, “S knows that p.” Knowing how and experiential knowledge are two such relevant kinds of knowledge. “Knowing how” is one sort of knowledge that “one learns only through observing another person, participating in an activity with another, or simply trying it out ourselves alone” (221). Dalmiya and Alcoff examine the institution of midwifery, prior/outside of the Western medicalization of pregnancy. They argue that the gender-specific “experiential knowledge” of midwives is “embodied in the emphasis midwives placed on *personal experience* and *empathy* with the pregnant women” (227, italics added). Dalmiya and Alcoff carefully unfold their argument, as to how something becomes not a mere skill, but cognitively relevant, and thus genuine

knowing how, “*even when knowledge is conceived as involving propositions*” (235, italics in original). They do so in order to underline the “discriminatory exclusionism of traditional epistemology” (235-236). Dalmiya and Alcoff establish that “a genuine instance of knowing how is a skill in which the subject has [...] a nascent grasp of the rules and principles underlying her activity that enable her to ‘recognize’ a clear formulation of them, and it is the latter that makes her simple skill cognitively relevant” (236-237). Finally, genuine knowing how implies that there is a normative dimension of “knowing how to” ascriptions (239).

Consequently, it is not merely the *belief/assent* to propositions that can be evaluated but also the *way these propositions are used*. Because evaluation or normativity is essential for epistemologically relevant processes, “*S knows how to do x*” passes muster (239, italics in original).

I argue that certain aspects of domestic work can be read as involving knowledge in the form of knowing how. Following Dalmiya and Alcoff, and in line with their claim that, unlike knowing that, knowing how can be a matter of degree, I argue that those who do less reproductive work,<sup>78</sup> will know less about it. This is a pivotal point in the argument for an equal distribution of said work. First, the men in my sample, who do less reproductive work than their female partners, can thus be perceived as epistemically disadvantaged regarding the question of reproductive work and its outsourcing. Having less of the concrete experiences of domestic work itself, one will tend to have less knowing how about this work. Second, drawing on standpoint theory, these men are epistemically disadvantaged in the sense that we can assume that as white, heterosexual, and cis-gendered, their social location, and correlated experiences will shape (yet not

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<sup>78</sup> Men in Austria perform on average 11 hours of unpaid domestic and care work per week; women perform 27 hours per week (Öif 2016).

determine!) their overall interests in gender relations and their critique of male domination within a patriarchal system. (This is a tricky argument, and I will complicate it below.)

Why ask white, heterosexual men then, if they occupy epistemically disadvantaged positions when it comes to questions about the gender politics of this work, and domestic labor itself? Because I am interested in how reproductive work is reasoned about, organized and what societal structures are relevant in these processes of making meaning around domestic labor. I am thus just as interested in the (structural) “gaps” in the knowledge, as in knowledge about the organization and performance of this work. Let me complicate my second point now. I take it to be vital not to lose the critical analytical perspective on power relations between groups and slip into relativizing claims. Relations of domination are real. And, as standpoint theorists have elaborated, they do have epistemic correlations, and dominant groups will generally be less responsive to the conditions of their privileged position. I am also wary of shutting down potentials for transformation towards gender equality. Homogenizing heterosexual masculinities, and normalizing the heteronormative, and patriarchal dimensions of hegemonic masculinity can act to strengthen rather than undermine the binary, patriarchal gender order. To remain open to the positive import of responsible practices in the domestic realm, I maintain that we need to challenge the often taken-for-granted understanding that most men will know “nothing” about the domestic workings within private households. I claim that the latter assumption stabilizes the reproduction of the asymmetrical tendencies of these relations even more. Thus, I understand my concrete questions regarding domestic work directed at men in outsourcing households as a challenge that shall also help to shift the asymmetry; by making tangible the things the men in my sample do and know, yet without being blind to the things they do not. I argue for a stance that, while not being

excusatory towards complicity with patriarchal forms of hegemonic masculinity on the part of all genders, sees that there is immense pressure to keep non-dominant masculinities marginalized; a stance that is interested in amplifying the multiplicity and dynamic nature in which transgressions from the dominant ideal occur in practice. I thus see as a feminist strategy to strengthen marginal positions, and practices that resist to and challenge the dominance of patriarchal forms of masculinity. I aim in this thesis to expose the construction and maintenance of epistemic ignorance in the outsourcing of domestic cleaning, as a form of knowledge that reproduces unjust social structures. Heteronormative patriarchy is one of these main unjust structures.

I argue that besides cognitive processes, embodied practices including affective transmission are essential for knowledge formation. Drawing on Dalmyja and Alcoff, I have underlined how human corporeality and a knower's particular lived experience are central for knowledge formation around domestic work. I have also elaborated that our conceptions of human permeability, in tandem with our ethical orientations, structure our knowing processes. Consequently, they too structure our individual and collective *semipermeable* membranes. That is, the epistemic patterns that shape where we typically go wrong, to paraphrase Mills (2007). I am advocating for an ethical orientation that does not build on a (capitalist) narrative of competition buying into a distorted image of isolated individuals; instead, I want to strengthen the counter-narrative that sees the permeable condition of human selves and human communities, and values the quality of good relations as indispensable for human (and nonhuman) flourishing. To create and uphold these relations care is required.

In the next section, I aim to retrace unjust epistemic patterns in the arena of domestic work, to locate in mundane interactions nodal points where ignorance and irresponsibility

are socially produced. I see this as a necessary step in order to work towards better and more just relations in the field of reproductive work and its outsourcing, which can rectify pernicious ignorance in semipermeable membranes of epistemic injustice.

### **The *Schmutztoleranzgrenze*, or how it is best not to see**

I understand the notion of *Schmutztoleranz* that I will discuss in this section as an epistemic category. In other words, learnt forms of inattentiveness towards dirt and domestic work that lead to ignorance as a particular form of knowledge, an “unknowing.” Epistemic *Schmutztoleranz* works as a *semipermeable* membrane that is open to some constituents and not to others; it shapes how dirty matters, or the work deemed necessary to clean dirt away is seen or felt. The semipermeable dimension of the epistemic category of *Schmutztoleranz* structures what is allowed to “get through” and what not; what can be seen and felt; what can pass and what is blocked.

I shall note that I take what is perceived as dirt in a particular context to be socially, and culturally, as well as politically constructed. What is more, attentiveness to dirt in the geographical context of Austria is gendered in particular ways. In this part of the chapter, I illustrate this gendered aspect of *Schmutztoleranz* by drawing on my empirical material from Austria as well as other qualitative studies conducted there. All genders learn in concrete contexts how to orient their behavior in relation to “dirt.” Analyzing sections from my empirical material, I show how certain kinds of inattentive practice are associated with notions of masculinity – and normalcy – whereas “appropriate” feminine attentiveness is problematized.

*Outsourcing Gendered Conflicts*

Let me start off this section with a quote from the acknowledgments of Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger*, where she describes what prompted her to engage with dirt – or “matter out of place” (1996, 36) – in context.

My other source of inspiration has been my husband. In matters of cleanness his *threshold of tolerance* is so much lower than my own that he more than anyone else has forced me into taking a stand on the relativity of dirt (Douglas 1996, viii, italics added).

What Douglas here captures conceptually as the relativity of dirt (with an example that comes from her own domestic arrangements with her male partner) can also be read, I would argue as situated in a broader context of gender politics and gendered responsibilities in domestic settings. In fact, what I want to highlight here is that I found in my informants' responses evidence that what is being outsourced is not only domestic cleaning itself – but the (potential) conflict that arises out of different, socialized gendered attentiveness to the material matter of “dirt.” Sabine Buchebner-Ferstl and Christiane Rille-Pfeiffer, in their report for the Austrian institute for family studies on the distribution of work within the family (2008), use the same neologism the participants in my sample used for the phenomenon – “Schmutztoleranz.” A passage in MAIZ' study (2004), concerned with the distribution of reproductive work within households and its connection to outsourcing, frames the employment of a domestic worker as a strategy of conflict management as well as “ransom payments” (61, translation from German by the author) to avoid this unfavored work.

The consequences of outsourcing domestic work to migrant women are relevant to the politics of gender. As are the root causes of the phenomenon. I draw attention to the fact that what brings households to outsource domestic work is often connected to gendered

conflicts around divergent demands and desires in regard to cleaning. Importantly, however, – and as feminist scholars in this field have shown time and again – the logics at work in this specific kind of outsourcing makes indisputably clear that gender cannot be researched in disconnection from other social categories, as a separate entity. An intersectional analysis of the interaction of gender with race, ethnicity and class is indispensable to make sense of outsourcing. When we realize that what is really being “outsourced” – along with the actual performance of domestic work – is a conflict related to the gender relations within the outsourcing households, an intersectional perspective also brings to light that this is happening within a broader frame of asymmetrical power relations. Within this broader frame, the right to have a harmonious family life in this regard also becomes a privilege of the middle and upper-class of outsourcing households in the global North. We could speculate about how this fits into a neoliberal logic in which the individual self has to do everything possible to lead the “best”/most efficient/“happiest” life they can. And – in line with the myth of the isolated, autonomous individual – maybe, without necessarily considering the consequences this has for others.

### *Epistemic Ignorance of Dirt*

I draw on literature on epistemic ignorance in order to expose the *structural* hindrances that stand in the way of transformation towards justice within the realm of reproductive work. This is to highlight the specific colorings of non-accidental incompetence to perceive certain relations and inequalities in the context of outsourcing. Active forms of “unknowing.”

Building on feminist and social epistemologies, Linda Martín Alcoff (2007) identifies three types of epistemologies of ignorance in the work of Lorraine Code, Sandra Harding, and Charles Mills that are relevant in regards to our understanding of “the intersection

between cognitive norms, structural privilege, and situated identities (39). First, knowers according to Code are “at once limited *and* enabled by the specificities of their locations” (42, italics in original). It follows from the claim that knowers are not interchangeable, that “knowers are not all ‘epistemically equal’” (42) “in regard to a specific epistemic objective” (ibid.). Alcoff maintains that ignorance, by this account, “should be understood as contextual” (43). In a similar vein, Kristie Dotson talks about “situated ignorance,” as an “unknowing” that “follows from one’s social position and/or epistemic location with respect to some domain of knowledge” (2011, 248).

The second argument for epistemic ignorance Alcoff identifies is Harding’s, which does not focus “on the general features of every epistemic situation but on the specific features of groups of knowers who share a social location” (Alcoff 2007, 43). Adding to Code’s general claim regarding situated knowers, Harding establishes that epistemic situations are correlated to group identity. What “follows most significantly from Harding’s approach,” in regards to the “‘geography of the epistemic terrain,’” Alcoff argues, “is that epistemic advantages and disadvantages accrue to social and group identities per se rather than identities only in relation to a given context of inquiry” (47). The epistemic advantage of marginalized peoples is not absolute, but “the pattern of epistemic positionality created by some identities has the potential for relevance in broad domains of inquiry, perhaps in any inquiry” (ibid.). Following this, ignorance is contextual, yet “there are patterns of ignorance associated with social and group identities” (ibid.). Interpreting Harding’s claim, pertaining to the correlation between group identity and epistemic dispositions, Alcoff writes:

*on balance*, members of oppressed groups have fewer reasons to fool themselves about this being the best of all possible worlds, and have strong motivations to gain a clear-eyed assessment of their society (44).



Regarding gender relations, this implies that

[m]ale-gendered identity is, conversely, epistemically disadvantaged in its situatedness in regard to certain matters: it has less of an outsider perspective [from social power] on dominant gender-related social scripts and forms of power and less of an overall interest in critically questioning them (46).

Because men are located differently in relation to socially constructed gender identities and gender politics that will correlate with differing experiences, men (especially if their gender identity intersects with higher class status, whiteness, and heterosexuality) will tend to have a different, partly inhibited, perspective on domestic work, including the matters of outsourcing. Men – just as women – are not, however, a homogenous group, but experience gender at their respective locations interacting with the axes of class, race, sexuality, et cetera, which will also impact on the complex web of “cognitive tendencies” (Mills 2007, 23) of the epistemic terrain. This is not to say that men cannot be committed to gender equality and develop feminist politics. They are, however, through their location within a heteronormative, sexist gender order, epistemically disadvantaged in certain respects. And – in analogous ways to women – men have to tackle these obstacles from their particular social position in order to actively work at undermining patriarchy, which includes assessing their practices within the household.

Alcoff finds the third type of an epistemology of ignorance in Mills’ work. Mills’ account of the “nature of oppressive systems” is even more “explicitly structural” (Alcoff 2007, 47).

The structural argument focuses not on the *generally* differentiated experiences and interests, but on the *specific* knowing practices inculcated in a socially dominant group. Whereas the last argument argued that men, for example, have *less* interest in raising critical questions about male

dominance, the structural argument argues that whites have a *positive* interest in “seeing the world wrongly,” to paraphrase Mills. Here ignorance is not primarily understood as a *lack* – a lack of motivation or experience as the result of social location – but as a substantive epistemic practice that differentiates the dominant group (Alcoff 2007, 47, italics in original).

Mills himself maintains that the “idea of group-based cognitive handicap” (Mills 2007, 15) is indeed “a straightforward corollary of standpoint theory: if one group is privileged, after all, it must be by comparison with another group that is handicapped” (ibid.). Mills claims, that what he calls “white ignorance” is not uniform across the white population, and “best thought of as a cognitive tendency – an inclination, a doxastic disposition – which is not insuperable” (23).

For Alcoff, Mills’ claims “about the existence of a white cognitive dysfunction” (Alcoff 2007, 49) require more explanation. She finds Max Horkheimer’s critique of the ontologies of Western science useful for this purpose (50-56). Alcoff is clear that “the problem is in the cognitive norm, not in the identity per se” (50). This is important. I too argue for a structural critique that challenges a notion of hegemonic masculinity that is dominating (heteronormative, homophobic and patriarchal). Critiquing (and transforming) narrow and damaging ideals of masculinity shall serve to make visible marginalized alternatives, or *caring masculinities* (Elliott 2016). I will elaborate this further in Chapter 6, when I highlight practices I see as potentials for transformation towards gender equality.

Referring to Horkheimer, Alcoff points out that neither the product nor the process of knowledge are neutral, but have a historical character (51). And that the

cognitive norms that produce ignorance as an effect of substantive epistemic practice are those that naturalize and dehistoricize both the

process and product of knowing, such that no political reflexivity or sociological analysis is thought to be required or even allowed. If one is simply describing the facts as they appear, then political questions about knowledge are indeed irrelevant and even unintelligible (56).

Alcoff thus argues that Horkheimer's work "provides us with a cognitive norm – a substantial epistemic practice rather than merely a lack – that explains systemic ignorance" (56).

Ignorance can be an accidental by-product of the limited resources humans have to understand their world. But that is not the only kind of ignorance (Sullivan/Tuana 2007, 1). If we agree that "both the object perceived and the perceiving organ are socially and politically preformed," then – according to Alcoff – "we might begin to think of ignorance as the result of a historically specific mode of knowing and perceiving" (51). Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana concur that sometimes what we do not know then is not a mere error, but to the contrary something *purposefully crafted*. "Especially in the case of racial oppression, a lack of knowledge or an unlearning of something previously known often is actively produced for purposes of domination and exploitation" (Sullivan/Tuana 2007, 1).

The production and maintenance of this latter kind of ignorance, as a specific form of knowledge, is what I want to highlight for my discussion of outsourcing and the kind of human responsibility required to remedy the injustice that is prevalent within this realm. In matters related to race, Mills (1997) emphasizes, the racial contract acts as an inverted epistemology,

an epistemology of ignorance, a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to

understand the world they themselves have made (Mills 1997, quoted in Alcoff 2007, 48).

In this way dominant social groups will be structurally fortified in a special kind of non-responsiveness towards their privileged positions and problems within white supremacist, heteronormative, patriarchal societies. This is a hurdle than needs to be put in plain sight in order to work towards justice – within the sector of domestic work, and beyond.

José Medina (2013) develops an account of (epistemic) responsibility and formulates three required cognitive minimums of knowledge. He emphasizes the connectedness of responsibility and epistemic competence: “there is no responsibility unless there is a minimal knowledge about self, others, and the world” (127). Drawing on a relational view of identity<sup>79</sup> and a relational view of self-knowledge<sup>80</sup>, Medina argues that both in the case of racial ignorance, as well as in the case of gender ignorance, “the lack of knowledge about one’s others (people of other races or of other genders) becomes simultaneously a lack of knowledge about oneself” (128-129). These structural, and actively produced, epistemic deficiencies are “prompted and protected by situations of oppression [that] undermine one’s status as a responsible agent” (129). “Systematic injustice produces irresponsible agents, for they tend to lack knowledge of themselves, of others, and of the world” (131). However, not all members of an unjust society are equally irresponsible epistemically, ethically, and politically (ibid.). According to Medina “socially produced ignorance and irresponsibility are *context-specific and highly sensitive to social positionality*” (131, italics in original). These epistemic, and normative, failures take different shapes for differently positioned subjects. They do affect everybody in an unjust society, but they do so differently (ibid.).

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<sup>79</sup> Medina is drawing on Latina feminists: Linda Martín Alcoff, Paula Moya and Ofelia Schutte.

<sup>80</sup> He takes this from critical race theorists: Charles Mills and Shannon Sullivan.

Elaborating an account of “*(socially produced) self-ignorance*” (143, italics in original) Medina claims that “the agent’s cultural background and history [...] do not simply escape his attention, but [...] have been carefully neglected and hidden from view in the culture’s self-image and representations of itself, thus producing self-ignorant subjects, that is, subjects who ignore important aspects of their own cultural identity and cultural history” (ibid.). This brings me to Sarah Lucia Hoagland’s account of whiteness. Hoagland emphasizes that the concept of whiteness is built on exclusion and racial subjection, but through an epistemology that presupposes autonomy and denies relationality between knower and known, these relationalities are rendered invisible. She discerns that what is invisible within a system of white supremacy is not whiteness, but the *relationality* with, our *interdependence* with, peoples of color; “that we are indebted to, made possible by, responsible to people of color” (Hoagland 2007, 99); and Hoagland continues:

*I am not making a moral point here; I am making an ontological point. I am not talking about acknowledging a debt; I am talking about whites’ existence. Not something we can pay off, but something to re-cognize and embrace. That (most) whites walk through our day ignorant of our interdependency with peoples of color is not about the invisibility of whiteness but rather about the erasure of peoples of color as subjects (99, italics in original).*

An epistemology of ignorance then is an epistemology that *structurally* and *violently fails to perceive* existing connections. These missing connections distort the image a privileged subject has of “others;” and – drawing on Medina – I argue, they simultaneously constitute a fundamental lack of self-knowledge.

The following examples shall serve to concretize instances of this enmeshedness of privileged positions of power at the intersection of gender, class and race/ethnicity, and responsiveness in my empirical study.

*Ignoring Dirt in Context. On Remaining or Becoming Inattentive*

The white, middle-class, opposite-sex couples I interviewed in Vienna outsource parts of their reproductive labor to migrant women who are performing domestic cleaning in the informal market. All the interviewees reported that within their relationship the woman did more unpaid domestic work at home than the man. None of my informants explicitly asserted that the reason for this distribution had to do with gender. What they did instead was to individualize their gendered divisions; their reasoning included arguments of personal preference, certain accidental character traits, or circumstances. “It could also be the other way around,” so the tenor among informants. Yet, it tends not to be the other way around. A recent study (Öif, 2016)<sup>81</sup> shows that, on average, women in Austria perform 27 hours of unpaid domestic and care work per week; the respective number of hours for men is 11. Even though my sample size would not allow for generalizable claims on this matter, it is thus obvious that there is a gendered pattern.

One very common line of explanation both the male and female interviewees frequently used to account for the uneven allocation of domestic work within their households was that they had different thresholds of tolerance of dirt. Some of my informants used the German word “Schmutztoleranzgrenze,” which translated means the threshold until which someone can tolerate dirt. This neologism is very close to the existing German word “Schmerztoleranzgrenze,” indicating the level up to which

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<sup>81</sup> The Austrian institute for family research (Öif) produced this study by order of the Federal ministry of families and youth: <https://www.bmfj.gv.at/ministerin/Aktuelles/Themen/Tag-der-Partnerschaftlichkeit.html>, Last accessed the 16. 04. 2016

someone can tolerate pain or something that figuratively hurts. As I elaborate below, I maintain that this association of pain and dirt is hardly accidental.

In the individual interviews, I asked my informants to explain to me in detail what exactly they did at home and how they performed their daily domestic routines. The translation of the following quote of Jakob, a male informant, from this section, is related to the concept of dirt tolerance:

Jakob: Because if I have breakfast, I put away my dishes and my things – the things I took out of the fridge before. But the cutting board – if I’ve cut bread – I don’t wash the cutting board, and I don’t wash the knife- so there are still going to be some breadcrumbs. Or the coffee grinder- there might still be coffee on the counter spilled from when I filled that into the espresso maker. *I don’t clean up after myself.* So, I don’t take a sponge cloth and wipe everything clean and then leave the house. I put away the things and then just leave. And that is just like- my view of – I put away everything anyway and everything is gone versus, yes true, but it’s not clean. So I guess, that’s a bit the difference in our views really, that we have (II Jakob, 22 my emphasis).

In my reading the different levels of dirt that Jakob and his partner (and the other men and women in my sample) could tolerate can be understood with the concept of attentiveness – as a practice of seeing or not seeing certain things. The “different levels of cleanliness” narrative is used by both men and women to indicate that the person, who sees it first and perceives the demand to carry out a specific domestic task, is also responsible for carrying it out. The other person then does not have “that problem.” The “failure” to see is convenient for the structurally privileged within these arrangements; as is not sensing asymmetry and not acknowledging the hierarchies that should be there for everyone to see. As I have elaborated in Chapter 4, attentiveness and responsiveness here interlink at

privileged irresponsibility. Non-responsiveness at the same time implies the reproduction of the very structures that afford some the luxury of a blind eye.

Having said that, I want to highlight that Jakob does tell me about the breadcrumbs and the spilled coffee, so he must have seen them, but he does not infer that it is his responsibility to clean them up. Bringing in what I said about epistemologies of ignorance before, one interpretation for Jakob's stance would be that given his structurally privileged position he perceives an entitlement not to "clean-up after (him)self," as he says. This is so even though Jakob mentions in passing that he does have the necessary knowledge required for the task (sponge cloth for wiping). The potentiality of him carrying out the task remains potential: he "could" do it; this points to the divide into *choice* versus *responsibility*. Simultaneously Jakob thereby implies the existence of somebody else who actually "does." Within the dominant paradigm of Western thought the supposed independence of his status is not interrogated but strengthened; he does not have to utter the second part of the sentence "I don't clean up after myself" – "*because somebody else does,*" for it to be intelligible. Jakob's practice of detachment from this part of the domestic task reinforces his privileged position vis-à-vis the other agents in his household. He is buffered by a structure in which denying the causal relationality between his behavior and that of his female partner, and the ignorance of his interdependence with their domestic worker passes uncontested.

Alice's account adds to a fuller picture of Jakob's extract of the breadcrumbs and spilled coffee on the counter. When I ask Alice if there were ever dissonances between her and her partner regarding the distribution of domestic chores she negates this (II Alice, ln 318-320). As the interview continues, Alice shares the following with me:

I: So, yes – well, we touched on that a little bit already, but I'm gonna ask this still – so – Do you know what exactly Jakob does- ?



Alice: -in the household?

I: Yes.

Alice: Yes (smiles), I do think that I know that (laughs).

I: Uhm – so the breakfast-things-?

Alice: Well, breakfast – well – morning dishes, or kitchen, that's his part.

Uhm, yeah he takes care of the cat related chores. He also gets the washing off the rack and stuff. Well, I often finish that. I don't know if that fits here, but-

I: Yes, yes (fast), that does all fit here (smiles)-

Alice: Uhm, he puts away the dishes, but he doesn't wipe off the counter. *I do that*, for example (smiles). So, I do the finishing touches then. Or, he gets the washing off the rack, but he doesn't put [the washing] away. I also do that most of the time. Or, he takes the linen off the bed, but doesn't put [the clean ones] on. So, it's always half-finished, and I finish the things – more or less. Yes.

I: Is that sometimes a reason for dissonances (laughs)?

A: Yes, sometimes that's annoying (does not laugh). Yeah (Alice II, ln 321-340, my emphasis).

Let me further add that both Alice and Jakob tell me that only Jakob has breakfast at home, whereas Alice usually only has a cup of coffee on weekdays before she leaves the house; this sheds a different light on the allocation of the chore of taking care of the kitchen after breakfast.

As in the extract above, it is often not only the quantitative distribution of domestic work but also a qualitative dimension that leads to conflict between couples. This can either mean that there are divergent expectations of *how* tasks are performed between the partners, or, that men and women tend to do *different kinds* of chores altogether. Buchebner-Ferstl and Rille-Pfeiffer (2008) suggest that there are gendered tendencies in which men often prefer to perform tasks associated with “creativity” – such as cooking, repair work, or gardening –, whereas women do more of the “*reproducing*” tasks of doing

the laundry, ironing, and general cleaning tasks (10). Another qualitative, gendered split can be observed, with *routine* work more often taken care of by women, and men choosing to do more *selective or partial* tasks (i.e. cooking weekdays versus preparing a meal on the weekend, when there is more time for it) (MAIZ 2004, 62). Michael's statement, below, about his passion for "partial vacuum cleaning," carries the selective task to an extreme.

Michael: -well, previously, I have to say that that was a bit of a burden on us, that we simply do have these different– uhm (slow) opinions about how much cleaning should be done in a flat, right? And uhm- I didn't care when- Well, for example, the partial vacuum cleaning is a passion of mine – that Doris claims is laughable.

I: The partial vacuum cleaning?

Michael: (smiling) Yes, yes, indeed. Because, if I see that there (points into a corner close to the table at which we are seated) is an accumulation of dust, then I vacuum clean exactly there.

I: I see (Michael II, ln 602-611).

I claim that an important aspect of outsourcing of domestic work in this geographical context is its function as a strategy to avoid conflict, emerging between partners, and which has to be seen in the broader context of gender relations within the Austrian society. All of the couples I interviewed confirm that there is less conflict regarding the differential Schmutztoleranz between the partners, now that a domestic worker is paid to perform parts of the cleaning done in their homes. In lieu of men doing approximately the same work – in quantitative as well as qualitative terms – it is domestic workers who step in. The following extracts from the individual interviews with Michael and Doris shall be exemplary of what I claim is primarily a transfer of work from men in the outsourcing households onto domestic workers.

In some of the interviews, the question of who initiated the outsourcing of reproductive work to a migrant domestic worker did come up organically. In the rest of the individual interviews, this information was shared after I inquired.

I: Uhm, on whose initiative was that? Or how did that come about-?

Doris: That was on Michael's initiative-

I: On Michael's- so he did- uhm-

Doris: Uhm- well, when we first moved in together, we didn't have a domestic cleaner- and, then it transpired that the interests (laughing) [in regards to cleaning] were a bit different (still laughing)- so that I wanted it to be cleaner than Michael. And he said: Yes, he doesn't feel like cleaning in the evening or on the weekend. And uhm- he then suggested having a domestic cleaner. And I said- Yeah (conciliatory), but if we both contribute, then it's not such a big effort- So, because for a while there that work stayed with me, yet I actually also had a lot to do for Uni then and it somehow became too much for me; and then we had a fight and I said: Well, but we can do that together, and then it's just half of the work- but somehow it didn't work. Finally, I said: Yes (resignedly/ consenting), he has to do that and organize a domestic cleaner. (Pause) Yes, so he did- well he did that- But the organization is now with me because I am at home more often- so that we can arrange that-

I: So, you are arranging the times and let [the worker] in?

Doris: Exactly. Yes.

I: Yet, originally you would have preferred to do the work yourself- or with Michael- ?

Doris: Yes, well- Especially- uhm- Yeah, or- well that he also contributes- I wanted that he also contributes- (Pause) contributes to the household- Because he, I believe, is not used to this at all from [his parent's] home- that he has to contribute- And, uhm- well I did do [a lot] for him- I do the laundry, and I go shopping- Well it would just be- All he would have to do was to vacuum clean the apartment once a week or so (Pause) that takes 20 minutes. And that was too much for him- (Pause),

and then I said: Ok- then you get a [domestic cleaner]- so you do that, and- Yes (II Doris, ln 113-146).

Michael describes this process of initiation as follows:

Michael: [...] And uhm- well it was like that- When we first moved in together, it was obvious pretty soon, that my part in cleaning was relatively low, and Doris' part was relatively high- and that somehow- was not so fair- and then I thought to myself, ok, probably it's better if that is done externally.

I: So that was on your initiative?

Michael: Yes. Doris actually didn't want that- initially, yeah. Now she is also pretty content, obviously (II Michael, ln. 163-170).

None of the respondents in my sample reported that, after the employment of a domestic worker, the remaining work is being distributed differently – that is, more equally – between the partners. The women in the outsourcing households effectively now do less work. However, this is not because the men do more, but because the total amount of work that is now distributed between the partners is reduced through outsourcing work to another woman. Responding to my question as to whether an equal distribution of domestic work was important to her, Sibylle's maintains:

Sibylle: Well, I think one won't achieve a fifty/fifty split anyways, I believe, because- (longer Pause) I mean, because he [her male partner] isn't home the whole day. And, uhm (Pause). But maybe [that he does] a part. And I mean, it's not like we do so much domestic work anyhow. (Pause) Well because we have Agnieszka (laughs) (Sibylle II, ln 277-281).

I claim that whether we understand the broader pattern behind this factual transfer of work as tending to lead from one woman to another woman, or from a man to another woman is a political choice.

Heteronormative ideology influences and strengthens these strategies of avoidance. Let me add that even though I rely on a sample of opposite-sex couples, I do not believe that the reasoning behind domestic work avoidance is exclusive to opposite-sex relationships. Indeed, there is no indication to assume such a difference between opposite-sex relationships and same-sex or other relations; even in cases where no women are present at all – as in all-male share-houses – analogous strategies of reasoning and avoidance of domestic work prevail (cf. Natalier 2003; MAIZ share as an aside that the lesbian couple in their sample also used outsourcing as a strategy of conflict resolution cf. MAIZ 2004, 58).

In the following section, I underline how misogynist assumptions and ascriptions of dominant gender conformity inform epistemic processes in this heteronorm matrix. I do so by discussing the association of dirt and pain in the interchangeable use of the notions of *Schmerz-* and *Schmutztoleranzgrenze* (pain, respectively dirt threshold).

*Painful Dirt or “Dirty” Pain? Domestic Cleaning as Obligation or Optional Challenge.*

I expand on this association of pain and dirt in regards to domestic work, with reference to passages from Frances’ and Jakob’s interviews. These participants use both of the words *Schmerz(toleranz)grenze* (the threshold up to which someone can tolerate pain) as well as the neologism *Schmutztoleranzgrenze* (the threshold up to which someone can tolerate dirt). Let me elaborate on how the association of dirt and pain unfolds different narratives in the respective contexts.

In the passage I want to highlight from Frances' individual interview, she uses *Schmutztoleranzgrenze* and *Schmerztoleranzgrenze* interchangeably. What is of particular interest to me here is that she portrays the lower "threshold" of dirt tolerance that she has vis-à-vis her male partner, as her *individual*, and – importantly – *problematic* character trait. When I ask Frances what domestic chores she specifically likes and/or dislikes doing at home, that is, things that she enjoys, that "feel" good, or – respectively – that feel unpleasant, she replies:

Frances: Well, yes, that is somehow my- my- probably my personal thing- *my personal problem*, that I do have a relatively low threshold of dirt tolerance<sup>82</sup>. Yes, that means, that – if it's dirty somewhere – I can't stand that/it's unbearable for me physically<sup>83</sup>. So I have to do something about it, right? And that's not necessarily pleasurable (smiling) to wipe that clean, but yes- (Frances II, ln 182-187, my emphasis).

Frances then continues to use the figure of a low *Schmerztoleranzgrenze* (threshold of *pain* tolerance) to describe the same phenomenon; she does not necessarily enjoy the performance of dusting or cleaning, she asserts, yet she "has to" do it (Frances II, ln 200). I read Frances' extract as an instance of individualizing and problematizing what could be perceived as plain conformity with socialized gendered expectations, in which the traditional feminine connoted behavior is to be attentive to, and to "see" the dirt, as well as to respond to it in action. Frances becomes responsible to the domestic realm by developing practices that correspond with her attentiveness.

Other male and female respondents also use this problematizing stance, that at times borders on pathologizing, towards stereotypical "feminine" behavior in relation to

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<sup>82</sup> *Schmutztoleranzgrenze*

<sup>83</sup> das halte ich körperlich nicht aus

domestic work; women's behavior in regards to cleaning is depicted as being too "meticulous," their demands of cleanliness as "exaggerate" (Alice II, ln 453-454). I maintain that this stance is part of the circular logic devaluing domestic work and degrading the people performing it, that I have already discussed. My aim here is primarily to focus on the gendered dimension of attentiveness and inattentiveness in relation to the phenomenon of *Schmutztoleranz*. While there are these moments in the interviews where informants in this young, well-educated, urban sample tend to disparage specific performances of femininity, which are perceived as "old-fashioned," I did not encounter analogous depreciation of "stereotypical masculine" behavior in the domestic realm.<sup>84</sup>

In the next extract, from Jakob's interview, we are confronted with the opposite cliché of a particular masculine stance towards dirt: Jakob brags about not being affected by the "disgusting" work of getting the dirt out of the siphon. Importantly, however, *not* being disgusted by this "disgusting work" is seen as a positive. In the passage that leads to the extract, I ask Jakob what chores he does not like to do. The bathroom is his reply. I invite him to elaborate a bit, and ask if this was an area that he does not enjoy taking care of, or rather something that he does not often do? Both, Jakob asserts; he does it rarely, *because* he does not like it at all. Unlike Frances – in the passage above – Jakob does not use a language of duty, but one of optionality. He indicates that he chooses to perform certain activities and not others, out of personal preference. While this might as well be the case for many women, the different choice of words is notable here. Continuing his elaboration, Jakob adds as an argument for him rarely cleaning this area, that his *Schmerztoleranz* (threshold of *pain*) is high, especially when it comes to this wet area.

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<sup>84</sup> Even a quite stereotypical association of "men and machines," pertaining to a connection of men with the technology-related chore of vacuum cleaning is *not* portrayed critically (Jakob II, 172-177).

Enquiring if he was talking about divergent demands here, or about the unpleasantness of the chore itself, Jakob responds to me as follows:

Jakob: No, not a bit. The activity itself- No, not at all- Well, I do have (breathes out), well those classic things- such as- Well, such as for example- If for example the siphon is blocked- I unscrew the thing, go in with tweezers, get the hair out. Those are the things that I actually do, that Alice doesn't like doing because she finds it a bit disgusting (Pause). Well, I reckon, I am not easily disgusted<sup>85</sup> by anything, right? Well, that's not a problem at all for me. It's rather this, well- I lack understanding that, (Pause) that someone would somehow think it's not clean- because it is ok – as it is. Uhm- (Jakob II, ln 634-642).

The epistemic category of *Schmutztoleranz* is here utilized in a complex way. On the one hand, Jakob's *high threshold* of tolerance of dirt makes him – in the example of cleaning the siphon – more suitable than his partner to perform the task. However, his high dirt tolerance is also used as a justification for cleaning the wet areas less often than his partner – for taking the liberty to *opt out* of performances of domestic chores. Hence, inattentiveness functions as strategically underpinning the warranting basis for choice (instead of responsibility). The quality of not being easily disgusted (even by extreme cases, such as the dirt in the siphon) works to actually minimize the amount of necessary domestic work and is portrayed as a positive, masculine, skill. Especially since it is set against the “negative example” (Jakob II, ln 670) of Jakob's grandmother in the next paragraph who is described as being too perfectionist in her approach to the cleanliness of the domestic space. Such a stance is outlined throughout the interviews as uptight – and here also as non-social (even “paranoid,” Jakob II, ln 677), as it is seen as standing in the way of enjoying the social dimension of the interactions in the privacy of one's home.

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<sup>85</sup> ich habe [...] wenig Ekel vor irgendwas, ja?



Jakob's remarks that there actually are people who enjoy cleaning, and who feel good after they have cleaned something (Jakob II, ln 669), paint those people as – at least – a bit weird and simultaneously reinforces the devaluation of reproductive work as such. To experience cleaning as relaxation – something that in Jakob's account is exclusively portrayed as pertaining to women – is to have a “mania of cleaning”<sup>86</sup> (Jakob II, ln 772).

In this binary logic, the social constructions of men and women are positioned differently towards the devalued work of domestic cleaning. In my sample, the tendency to “see the dirt first,” that is, to have the lower threshold of dirt tolerance (than one's partner) is individualized, and – for the most part – explicitly argued to be independent of gender. Implicitly, however, a gendered structure is clearly present in the descriptions of the respondents. Coming back to the association of dirt and pain, I claim that Frances and Jakob paint two rather different pictures here. I would argue that what is particularly “hurting” in Frances above extract, is not only that she “has to” perform the socially devalued work of domestic cleaning, but the context that puts her in a position in which she “has to” do it – and hence the fact that domestic work is *unequally distributed* between her and her male partner. In Jakob's narrative, pain comes to figure as a *challenge*, as something that can be, or should be, endured. Either by being able to cope well in a dirty environment, or by – occasionally – facing extraordinary tasks, such as cleaning the siphon. To be inattentive and resistant to dirt – and hence to have a high threshold of dirt/pain tolerance, becomes a positively valued skill.

In the next passage, which is taken from Thomas' individual interview, the association of inattentiveness towards dirt becomes even more explicitly gendered as masculine. The extract is from a passage where I ask Thomas if he can decipher a connection between his relationship with his female partner and his domestic activities.

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<sup>86</sup> Putzfimmel

Thomas: [...] If I (Pause) If, for example, I were living alone, then- things would- things would for sure look differently obviously, right? In so far that, some things, well (Pause) would be in a worse state, actually, right? As one [would picture it] in a *man's* household quite often, well- Where more things are scattered around actually. And it's also true, that- if I am somehow at home- uhm- alone, for a longer period – which really doesn't happen often – then I slack/let myself go<sup>87</sup> for two or three days, and then – I'll fix it afterwards (laughs) (Thomas II, ln 277-286, my emphasis).

Jakob, who describes his former bachelor pad as being in quite a different shape to his apartment with Alice now, makes a similar observation. Back then, Jakob claims, he would not have done the dishes, until he ran out of glasses (Jakob II, ln 1054-1056). He continues with a narrative about *men* and *boys*,

Jakob: I think that is classic – maybe even- I don't know, one of the most classic role models that I would expect – maybe it is a [false] accusation – But I would say, that men do have a much higher threshold of pain in this regard. Or boys, do have a much higher threshold of pain, in regards to uhm- concerning [what is] clean or not clean (Jakob II, 1063-1068).

With statements like these the participants naturalize a specific, inattentive stance towards domestic work as “masculine.” I maintain that this naturalization of supposedly appropriate, “normal” behavior for men, in a context in which this is contrasted with “weird,” “feminine” compartment, is normalizing inattentiveness and problematizing attentiveness in relation to domestic work.

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<sup>87</sup> dann lasse ich immer gleich einmal zwei, drei Tage die Zügel extrem schleifen eigentlich

Within a culture that devalues domestic and care work, to like, or even enjoy, the performance of these chores becomes a weak position to be in. Several passages from the interviews with the women in my sample indicate that it is difficult to acknowledge potential enjoyment, without being stuck with the performance of most of the work. What at times seems to be more annoying than the actual performance of (parts of) the “dirty work” (Anderson 2007) in these accounts, is the assumption that they will do *all the work for* their partner.

Alice: Uhm, actually well- As I (emphasized by speaker) basically like to clean (smiles), but don’t want to clean everything, we agreed that – if Jakob doesn’t want to clean – we’ll have to find a solution that works for both of us (Alice II, ln 147-150).

Hence, my claim that what hurts exactly in the extract from Frances’ interview associating dirt with pain is that the domestic responsibilities are unevenly distributed between her and her male partner. In Thomas’ and, particularly, in Jakob’s narrative of cleaning the siphon, I would suggest an interpretation that sees the painfulness associated with dirt as a “challenge” for a kind of “tough” masculinity seeking to master a specific kind of “pain.”

Implied in the extracts I compiled in this section is a very narrow picture of what masculinity is in these contexts. Dominating – and dominant – ideals of masculinities are not only oppressive towards women, but towards men and – not least – to gender non-conforming people. It is thus important to emphasize that men can and do act differently than suggested in these quotes, and to encourage a multiplication, an opening up of these homogenizing binaries; so we have better tools to work towards gender equality within and outside of the household. Men – as a heterogeneous group – do have stakes in this process aiming towards equality. What I criticize are narrow and damaging ideals

(reproduced by all genders) – not men as a group. Ideas and ideals that confine what it can mean to “be a man,” and do not challenge, but strengthen hierarchies. Masculinity can be more than a mere detachment from domestic work; and more than compliance with the hegemonic ideal of a heternormative, homophobic patriarchy. Alternatives can be found in non-dominating, “nurturing” or “caring masculinities” (Hanlon 2012; Elliott 2016), that integrate “values of care, such as positive emotion, interdependence, and relationality, into masculine identities” (Elliott 2016, 241); or in what Robert Heasley (2005) calls “queer masculinities of straight men,” “ways of being masculine outside heteronormative constructions of masculinity that disrupt, or have the potential to disrupt, traditional images of the hegemonic heterosexual masculine” (310), weakening the system of oppression (320). I see this in line with bell hooks’ call on men to reject domination and to “become disloyal to patriarchal masculinity” (hooks 2004, 115).

I will elaborate on this in the next chapter, when I locate potentials for transformation towards gender equality in everyday practices. I argue that instead of trying to all become “free” *from* domestic responsibilities, we should aim for structural conditions in which all genders can realize their potentials to be attentive, responsible and caring individuals. This is pivotal, especially since the case of outsourcing illustrates so clearly that the project of becoming “carefree” necessarily excludes most people – that is those who cannot afford this individualized strategy. I aim to further the process aimed at a more caring society by highlighting and amplifying those attentive practices that the same men in my sample *already* are using.

I have tried to sketch here what I have come to understand as an avenue of the emergence and reproduction of the supposedly “women-specific” problem with reproductive work: the fact that the much-invoked work/life balance in the dominant discourse is still

portrayed as pertaining to women only. I have traced how a socialized, gendered pattern of inattentiveness (to dirt) that is interacting with the low value ascribed to everything “domestic,” and combined with a general depreciation of corporeality (that I highlighted in Chapter 4) produces epistemic ignorance; a gendered, epistemic category of differential dirt thresholds within households, that cannot be individualized, but must be seen as part of broader structures of racialized gender relations.

The notion of semipermeable membranes I elaborated in this chapter serves to combine the ontological condition of human permeability with the specific, non-accidental patterns of attentiveness and responsiveness that correlate with gendered and raced scripts. The specific semipermeable membranes I looked at in this chapter focused primarily on gender. I argued that the socialized, gendered (in)attentiveness of the men and women in my sample that I capture with the notion of the *Schmutztoleranzgrenze* has implications for epistemic processes. The *semi-* in semipermeable membranes thus designates an import from the epistemic patterns of ignorance; a collective structure that shapes the form of epistemic processes and their content through affective, everyday, embodied interactions. I utilized the semipermeable – that is, the epistemic ignorant – category of *Schmutztoleranz* to highlight the gendered, socialized differences of the domestic desires and demands the men and women in my sample put forward.

In the following chapter, I will finally turn to the practices of attentiveness and responsiveness, I found my respondents were already using. I argue that it is in these practices that responsibility can emerge.



## Part III

### Beyond Critique





# 6

## A Call for Practice

Critique in and of itself does not lead to change (hooks 2000, 35).

This Chapter is about the important implications that *actually doing* domestic and care work have. I argue that practicing attentiveness, as a central part of reproductive work, has epistemic, ethical and political consequences. By performing reproductive work, all genders acquire embodied knowledge, and social skills such as empathy and corporeal, affective, and cognitive responsiveness to human vulnerability and interdependence. Domestic and care work can be burdensome *and* pleasurable. While the difficult dimension is often escalated by its unequal distribution that overburdens some and spares others, the pleasurable aspect is routinely invisible in the rampant devaluation of said work. In order to valorize reproductive work, I claim that everyone, and especially those in structurally privileged positions who currently perform very little domestic and care work, has to actually do it.

The skills and knowledge acquired in the process include the development of attentiveness and responsiveness. Moreover, while performing reproductive work, the devaluation and lopsided organization of this important work become more accessible. Performing domestic work also has ethical implications, by providing potentials to become more empathetic towards currently marginalized groups. Last, a more equal distribution of reproductive work has transformative political implications. The current patriarchal and colonial, oppressive distribution of labor has a deleterious, anti-democratic effect and reproduces ignorant subjects. This ignorance, however, is not just any gap in knowing, but covers knowledge central to being human and actively constitutes a hierarchical system. Beyond the personal gains received by performing domestic and care work, a more equal distribution of reproductive work can thus be seen as countering this epistemic ignorance, and is a tool of democratization (cf. Tronto 2013).

I draw on Niall Hanlon's work (2012) and argue that doing reproductive labor does have a transformative effect of a shift of perspectives, and the development of other-centered nurturing dispositions on all genders. Care work links the physical tasks of *caring for* another, with feeling concern – *caring about* another (Ungerson 1990). For Hanlon caring about refers to this "other-centered disposition", something "that *caring work engenders*" (2012, 31, italics added). The development of concern for another, empathy, "caring about," what Hanlon calls "other-centered dispositions," is facilitated through the actual embodied practice of care – by *doing* it. However, it is harder to sustain this claim regarding the benefits of performing reproductive labor for the kinds of "dirty" domestic work I am mostly interested in in this project – those that do *not directly* involve a care-receiver; work such as doing the laundry, cooking, or cleaning. Nevertheless, I argue that the transformative epistemic, ethical and political benefits of

performing (narrowly defined) care work extend to domestic cleaning. These tasks are ultimately directed at human wellbeing, and necessary part of “care.”

I maintain that certain kinds of attentiveness and responsiveness emerge out of the concrete, corporeal experience of performing this kind of reproductive work. Attentiveness and responsiveness, too, shape what Hanlon calls “other-centered dispositions.” I claim that the fact that it is more difficult to see the positive, caring potentials of domestic cleaning, than that of more “rewarding” work of i.e. childcare, is – at least in part – *because* of the low value ascribe to invisibilized cleaning work within the hierarchy of domestic tasks.

Domestic and care work shapes our feelings (of disgust and pleasure to name but two), affective relations, dispositions, and sensibilities – our emotional, and ethico-political worlds; it co-constitutes what we are aware of, or become attentive and responsive to. It structures our perception and has epistemic and ethical implications that can counter epistemic ignorance. Although I will not elaborate on the political implications in detail here, I see my claim about the relevance of attentive and responsive individual practices to be clearly embedded within a larger political frame. Caring practices by men – and all genders – are part of a structural shift towards more caring societies. That is, societies whose structures facilitate, and support nurturing attitudes and caring practices.

### **Men and Reproductive Work; the Case of Caring Masculinities**

In *Masculinities, Care and Equality: Identity and Nurture in Men's Lives* (2012), Niall Hanlon researches the construction of masculinities in relation to *care* in the Irish context. Hanlon assesses the modern construction of dominant masculinity as *care-free*. Yet, he importantly also accounts for the actuality of the lived experiences of the men in his empirical study vis-à-vis care, some of which clearly contradict the essentialist idea of

differences between men and women in respect of care: his research shows that “men can care” (202). Hanlon found that his participants were drawing on four care-free gender discourses that “writ[e] out primary caring from masculinity” (182). These discourses stabilize and reproduce *care-free masculinity* with the claims that *care-full masculinity* is: “*unnatural* by conflicting with men’s evolutionary and biological nature; *dysfunctional* by disrupting the natural social order; *impractical* by contradicting sensible economic considerations; and *abnormal* by deviating from normative values and conventions” (ibid., italics in original). Starting from different perspectives in navigating these narratives concerning the relationship between masculinities and care, the men in Hanlon’s study performed care to different degrees themselves. Here, I will focus on Hanlon’s research findings that are relevant for my project. In his study, he found that engagement in the work of care – experienced as *both* burdensome *and* rewarding – changed the men: their horizons broadened, their perspectives shifted, their (gendered) identities transformed. Even men “who, before undertaking caring, held conventional attitudes to the division of family caring” (201) reported on the “emotional payoffs” of caring (ibid.).<sup>88</sup>

Hanlon maintains that caring involves physical, mental, and emotional dimensions (41). The unequal, gendered, distribution of this work leads to a situation that has particular consequences. It has consequences for the inequalities experienced by women, who are – predominantly – “the world’s carers” (42); “but it also has implications for men,” argues Hanlon, “for the material benefits derived from avoiding it, as well as the emotional

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<sup>88</sup> For an account of masculine gendered domestic work see Rosie Cox on home maintenance work in Aotearoa/New Zealand as a form of caring (2014; 2012; 2010). Cox found that for “proper Kiwi blokes” home repairs often figure as expressions of love and care for family and friends, and are important parts of their relationships. Here too, men receive pleasure and affirmation from giving care; and Cox shows “how important some forms of care giving are to sense of self – even for some men” (2012, 13).

rewards related to successfully embracing it” (ibid.). Hanlon found that central to the meanings of care in men’s lives were “feelings of love and belonging that caring engenders” (136).

[C]aring obligations for one’s children or parents were noted to provide life with meaning and purpose by giving life a clear focus and a feeling of solidarity. Caring was believed to offer common rewards, including feeling loved and respected for doing it, experiencing emotional intimacy, and feelings of self-esteem, respect, and competence. Doing caring made the men feel ‘responsible’, ‘competent’, ‘proud’, ‘challenged’, ‘joy’, ‘fantastic’, ‘happy’, ‘brilliant’, and wanted, especially – although not exclusively – in respect of the care of children (136-137).

It was evident, then, “how the love relations rewarded men with reciprocal benefits; they were not all about self-sacrifice. *They also felt good about themselves* for doing care even if it was sometimes couched in negative terms as relief from feeling guilty about being care-free or care-less” (ibid., italics added).

Again, the case about the emotional and mental benefits of performing reproductive work is more readily made for personal care practices that involve a more direct gratification. With domestic tasks way down at the bottom of the hierarchy of reproductive labor, the devaluation of the mundane, corporeal, domestic, feminine-coded work is ever more striking. I claim that the argument about the relevance of the embodied experience of the work as burdensome *and* rewarding extends to the domestic work of scrubbing the toilet, mopping the floor, and emptying the dishwasher; even though it is more difficult to see. The practice of the work opens up potentials of being affected. Performing reproductive work engages people corporeally, emotionally and affectively; this, I argue, shapes our perception and has thus epistemic implications.

## Embodied Practice, Attentiveness, and Knowledge

In the process of doing reproductive labor we learn about the relevance and value of this work. What is more, the requisite skills – including attentiveness and responsiveness – become visible to the person performing the work. Practicing domestic and care work thus helps to remedy the epistemic ignorance I have assessed in the previous chapter, by transforming subjects in a way that makes them less ignorant in regards to this work and its current organization. It is in this sense that I argue that doing reproductive labor has epistemic implications. As Hanlon notes, the gendered distribution of domestic and care work has the effect that men disproportionately *misrecognize* and take for granted women's emotional work in relationships (Hanlon 2012, 155).

[M]en are often *blind* to the love and care that they receive, devaluing the work that partners do because doing so would convey need and dependency [...]. Men's identification with self-sufficiency and independence means they find it difficult to accept and realise the importance of interdependency within relationships (ibid., italics added).

The above quote shows that a process of active invisibilization of reproductive labor and the emotional work inherent in it is required to uphold the dominant narrative of independence and autonomy. This narrative of independence is central to hegemonic masculinity in the global North – and emphasized femininity, instrumental in the reproduction of the ignorant, patriarchal paradigm. To make visible relations of vulnerability and (inter)dependence and to value the corporeal, mental and affective dimensions of reproductive work constitutes a threat to the dominant and domineering narrative. We must not forget, however, that the dominant narrative is not the only one we have.

Incompetence can be the effect of a lack of practice. Hanlon continues: “Ironically, men’s repression of emotion and denial of vulnerability often results in a lost ‘emotional common sense’ and greater dependency on women” (ibid.). Importantly, however, Hanlon points out that men do emotional labor as well, and states that: “complying with masculine feeling rules about managing stress, dissatisfaction, expressing anxiety, and intimacy is also intensely emotional” (153). That is, “men are often highly skilled emotional actors,” as “complying with masculine emotional codes is itself gendered emotional work” (ibid.). The dominant notions of masculinity, however, limit the way men are using their emotional skills, as men self-censor. “What dominant masculinity does write out [...] is nurturing labour, the other-centered emotional disposition of care” (153).

#### *Knowing to Care/Caring to Know*

Michael, one of the men in my sample, reported in his individual interview that he often said – as sort of standing joke with his partner, Doris – that “actually I clean the whole of the flat, because I pay for [the domestic worker]” (Michael II, ln 596-597). I picked up on this equation of paying *as* cleaning in Michael and Doris’ joint interview, asking if there was a difference between doing the cleaning and paying for the cleaning, or what such a difference would entail, according to them. Doris subsequently acknowledged the process of the work, and thus its value. Even though it was a relief now that the tasks are being done, Doris reflects on the different value ascribed to the work. If she spilled something on the kitchen floor, knowing that the domestic worker was about to clean in the coming days, she asserts, she would not be too careful with cleaning it up. “Yet if I had to clean it myself – always – then I would probably do it more thoroughly” (Michael/Doris II, ln 148-149). When asked by Michael if she would rather have him or the domestic worker

clean, Doris settles for the domestic worker. The reason she gives though is that she is not satisfied with the quality of Michael's domestic cleaning, and very satisfied with the careful work delivered by the domestic worker. In her individual interview Doris did specify that initially, she would have rather shared the domestic cleaning with Michael than outsource it. Since Michael uses his incompetence as avoidance (cf. Chapter 5; also cf. Hanlon 2012, 193), we can infer that her frustration with his cleaning is greater than the desire not to employ a domestic worker. Michael then elaborates that he does not really believe that paying for domestic cleaning and actually doing the cleaning are the same thing. Yet,

Michael: In my 'mental accounting' (uses the English phrase) this is registered at least as part of my domestic performance. Definitely. (.) Uh- and the question of- how much I give of myself- so that- that this is working – well also depends on how much money I have, right? If I don't have a lot of money, then it would probably be associated with much effort, to afford something like this, right? Yet, if I can make ends meet anyway – then, probably it does maybe not really hurt me to pay those few Euros so that this is covered, right? In this sense- it is a relatively painless way – for me – to contribute a domestic performance (Michael II, ln 171-180).

Prompted to elaborate what it was exactly that makes outsourcing his preferred way to contribute to the household, Michael reiterates he did not like some – though not all – of the actual activities, the *doing* of the domestic chore.

Michael: Because I – well, uh- Because [I don't like] the activities, the performance of these cleaning chores- So (.) not of all of them, right? Well, I'm happy to tidy up and stuff like that, right? But – for example, vacuum cleaning, then mopping the floor, or wiping some shelves, or – I don't know – cleaning the toilet, or what else has to be done? Or, for



example- cleaning off glass panes, with some- with a window cleaner- and then afterwards it looks even more hideous than before and (Doris laughing in the background)- and I also don't have the requisite skills to do that in a way that it is clean afterwards, within an acceptable timeframe, uh (.) Those are simply tasks that I don't like to do (Michael JI, ln 186-195).

I also learn that Michal did not receive the necessary skills in his family of origin. Of course, this does not mean that he can never acquire them.

In the case of the work of face-to-face care, Hanlon notes that having “caring responsibilities as children is related to men feeling more capable doing caring as adults, even though many other factors intervene and influence the caring one does in life” (Hanlon 2012, 202). Hanlon also found that becoming engaged in caring activities changed not only the particular masculine identities of the men, but their *appreciation* for caring work, and furthered their *knowledge* about both the value of the work and the skills involved. Tommy, one of Hanlon's participants, expresses the knowledge he learned as an adult as follows:

I realized how difficult it was for women when I was left with the children... I had only two children and my mother had eleven children and I was struggling to do the basic stuff and I realized how difficult it was for a woman to manage and how resourceful and how creative and how strong they were. And only then could I identify with their struggle and then I had a different opinion on the roles and how brave they were and how much they were getting short changed... so I began to identify with them (204-205).

In his study, Hanlon differentiates his participants into *Conservatives*, *Sharers*, and *Carers*. He defines as “Carers,” those men who undertook primary care roles. According to Hanlon, these Carers

typically resisted traditional gender ideology and maintained they did all aspects of caring. Since they have experienced both the burdens and benefits of doing caring work at first hand, these men have greater empathy with the caring work done by women and expressed a more compassionate and caring masculinity. They did not use essentialist discourses to the same degree as Conservatives because this ideology is undermined by their experience that they are competent carers (200).

Central to my argument in this chapter, Hanlon claims that he found a clear affinity between *doing* caring work, “and professing a Conservative, Sharing or Caring ideology” (202, italics in original). That is, whether or not the men in his study were practicing care work, impacted on what they *thought* about the work of care and its gendered connotations. Moreover, Hanlon states that out of the embodied experience of reproductive labor emerged “a greater appreciation of the minutiae of the physical and emotional burdens and complexity of caring” (202). This buffers my argument that in order to valorize reproductive work, we need embodied knowledge of it: we need to perform it.

Hanlon also comments on the implications of the care practices on the men’s gendered identities. Doing the work led the men to have “a more flexible definition of masculinity, men’s roles, and men’s caring capacities” (ibid.). I read this as potentials for a critique of “oppressive social norms [that] make it hard for men to care” (201). Men being frustrated with the dominant societal ideals of individualism and competitiveness can – in the best case – gear their anger towards political transformation. As Hanlon’s informant Rory notes: “If we all work at care we begin to see the value of specific caring things. It’s because it’s a less caring society that we find that... [the] caring thing is less valued” (207). To revalue domestic and care work – in a non-essentialist way – is part of a transformative politics of reproductive work.

Men, undertaking primary caring within the same structural frame as women, also perceive the work as “isolating” (205). They “realise how *undervalued* caring is when they experience their caring being unappreciated” (ibid., italics added). Men who care, start to “empathise with the invisibility, lack of recognition, and the emotional burdens” (206) of reproductive work. Care-free masculinity is thus “undermined by the experience of doing caring work,” with men who do this work developing “a more nurturing and compassionate masculinity” (203). This, in turn, Hanlon argues, “enabled men to develop caring capabilities including practical emotional and cognitive caring attributes, and nurture caring values” (ibid.). Practicing care also supported men to “construct other-centered sensibilities, and to engage with fears surrounding vulnerability.” Speaking to the contradiction of vulnerability and masculinity within the dominant narrative, Hanlon convincingly maintains that “[w]hilst we cannot do anything about our human vulnerability except to deny it, we can change the script of what it means to be a man” (209).

In short: people develop caring personalities by performing care. This implies that the myth of the innate and natural capacities of women to care is dependent on men’s care-free practices; care-ful masculinities counter that stereotype. I referred to Hanlon’s work here as it illustrates how caring attitudes and dispositions emerge out of the work of care. Performing reproductive work facilitates the development of empathy and compassion; it provides not only practical skills<sup>89</sup>, but broadens out ethical horizons. Building on this, I argue that our mental and emotional sensibilities and practices, and the affective relations

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<sup>89</sup> When I talk about furthering the necessary skills of domestic work, this is not to be understood as a “professionalization” of reproductive work, in line with a neoliberal capitalist logic. Professionalizing of feminine-coded domestic work in the marketplace is indeed often associated with masculinity – and a rise of value (cf. Scrinzi 2010). This valorisation, however, is again set against women’s everyday household “labor of love,” which, in turn, is devalued. Professionalization thus does not decouple this kind of work from gender, or, for that matter, from race and ethnicity. Also cf. Cox (2010) for an analysis of the portrayal of skills in the commoditization of masculine-coded home maintenance work in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

within which we are embedded shape our perception and knowledge formation processes. Again, this focus on the epistemic implications shall serve to undercut and transform the epistemic ignorance co-constituting the current, unjust organization of reproductive labor. Let me now turn to the domestic practices as shared in the go-alongs by the men participating in my study.

### *Individual men's domestic practices*

Regardless of how gender-essentialist or constructivist masculine gender identity and men's participation at home is framed, I perceive the actual embodied domestic performances of men as an important locus for practices of attentiveness and responsiveness to emerge, be learned, and passed on to the next generation.

In the last phase of my multi-stage empirical research design, I accompanied each of the men in my sample in a domestic chore of their choosing. It was important that the task was something they carried out routinely and hence were familiar with, providing they felt comfortable enough with my presence in this (artificial) setting, in which I was asking questions while they performed the task. I made clear at the start that the goal of the go-alongs was not to "judge" the excellence of the outcome, but rather for me to have access to their reflections about the process of the work. Nevertheless, the situations that emerged in our encounter were still artificial. One of the respondents, Michael, who had posed direct questions about the hypothesis of my research, also asked critically about my disciplinary background and the "constructed" nature of anthropological research. In the go-along he shared that he and his partner would jokingly use my study to discipline each other into doing domestic work. If Doris did not want to do some chore, he would say "Well, I will have to tell Ms. Prattes about it. (I laugh). And she is going to scold you"

(Michael GA). My study, and/or my person, thus also came to figure as the “household police” who would assess the quality of the participants’ domestic labor.

I let the couples decide as to whether the men’s female partners would be present for the go-along. In four cases their partners were at home; only Stefan’s partner Sibylle was not present. Stefan was on parental leave at the time of the go-along, taking care of his child, while Sibylle was at work. Three of the men in my sample, Theo, Thomas, and Stefan, chose to cook; Michael opted for cleaning up the kitchen after his partner had cooked. In each of these cases, I was also invited to share the meal with them. Jakob chose to clean the bathroom floor with a steam broom.<sup>90</sup>

Let me start with Michael. For his go-along, Michael picked the chore of cleaning up the kitchen after his partner had cooked for all of us. While doing so, he pointed out twice that his partner Doris was not doing anything while he did the clean-up; his insistence that she used unusually much “stuff” to cook with that day further suggested the artificiality of the situation. Doris commented that, for the purpose of the go-along, she had tried hard not to clean any of the pots and dishes already while cooking, the way she would usually do it.

To tidy up, or establish order, Michael tells me, was something that he would not mind because it corresponds with his personality type. The first step in his clean-up was to put everything in the dishwasher that fits there – to do a “pre-selection” (Michael GA.). This, he told me, was to “reduce complexity,”<sup>91</sup> something he claims he was also good at in his paid work. Similarly, the “satisfying task” of separating and recycling waste, was also about “reducing complexity” by “making everything nice and tidy.” Michael asserts “this

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<sup>90</sup> A steam broom is a cleaning appliance that uses steam to thoroughly clean flat surfaces.

<sup>91</sup> If not specified otherwise, all quotes in this section are taken from the go-along with the respective informant.

is a matter for the head, of course.” He is thus emphasizing the mental component and downplaying the corporeal aspect of the task. The kitchen towel was a site of contestation between Michael and Doris. For Michael, the appropriate place for the kitchen towel is on its hook, and he does not like when Doris while cooking, “throws [it] in places where it doesn’t belong” (Michael/Doris JI, ln 420-421). Michael perceives the kitchen towels to be “a bit disgusting, to be honest. They are always a bit damp, dirty” (Michael GA). In his portrayal, Michael’s attentiveness towards a messy kitchen that needs tidying up, or his disgust toward damp kitchen towels lingering on the kitchen bench, have a rational undertone of “mental work.” Framed as “reducing complexity,” the emotional and corporeal dimensions also inherent in the task of tidying up are de-emphasized in Michael’s portrayal.

Although Michael does not appreciate domestic work *in general*, there are *specific* moments of pleasure derived from the performance of domestic tasks that come to the fore in his go-along. These moments of pleasure are gained from “tidying up” and other “satisfying tasks” of “reducing complexity,” which, Michael maintains, correspond with his personality type. Michael’s portrayal of his work that emphasizes the rationality inherent in his performance, and the “mental” components of the chores, locates it at a specific, masculine gendered (, and classed) location. Nevertheless, Michael becomes attentive to the particular demands of the tasks in the process of doing them. His disgust of the “damp” and “dirty” kitchen towel, too, is not a general devaluation, but the acknowledgment of a specific (negative) experience growing out of his practice.

Some of the informants – Michael, Theo, and Thomas – while trying to perform well, also joke about their lack of skills and/or assumed slowness at their chosen task. Thomas does so most explicitly, ridiculing his “consecutive” (Thomas GA) approach to cooking, as he was unable to “multi-task.” Cutting vegetables is something Thomas enjoys and

describes as “meditative.” Yet, Thomas claims he was slow at it and lacking knowledge. He tells me he had watched a YouTube clip to learn how to “correctly” chop an onion, because “nobody ever explained that to me.” Asked if he also enjoys the process of shaping the dumplings he prepares, Thomas replies: “That’s great, actually. Funny enough, I’m not even that bad at it. That’s one of my natural talents.” Thomas is content with the texturally pleasing “fluffiness” of the dumplings he made, something that he attributes to their steam oven. Thomas tells me that he recently also started to make pizza from scratch, including making the dough. He also likes to bake cakes.

Thomas also emphasizes that it was important to clean up and store away in the dishwasher the used pots and dishes while cooking because he would not like to do that after the meal, and “I have to do it anyway.” Nevertheless, Frances and Thomas have different opinions about how satisfactory this cleaning up is.

While joking about his (supposed) slowness and lack of skills, Thomas does find positive aspects in his practice of cooking. He notices how meditative the cutting of vegetables is for him, and the pleasure that comes from succeeding at shaping dumplings that turn out to be fluffy and nice. The extracts from Thomas go-along also show how the bad feeling that he is not good at the tasks in question potentially overshadows his pleasurable experiences. Thomas shares that he might be “slow,” and thus lacking practice, or lacking embodied knowledge and skills, because he was never taught certain things – like chopping onions. Consequently, he enjoys shaping the dumplings, as he thinks he is “not even bad at it,” and assesses them to be of good quality. This, in turn, partly comes out of his knowledge about the use of their steam oven for making dumplings “fluffy.” Thomas go-along illustrates how in the process of performing a domestic task, he becomes aware of other things that are connected to it. He notices that he does not like to clean up the kitchen after cooking, and thus tries to clean away as

many things as possible while he is cooking already. This attentiveness emerges out of his performance of the task, and the knowledge he acquires in the process.

In contrast to Thomas, Theo cooks more often than his partner, as Viktoria does not like to cook at all. Theo started to cook when he was a student. He is the only one of men in the study, who claims he also learned from his mother, observing what she did and then trying it out himself. He was only nine years old when he baked his first Sachertorte (Theo GA). His passion for cooking, Theo asserts, was passed down from his mother, whereas the naturalness for him to cook, comes from his father who used to cook on the weekends, or on public holidays. Theo claims that sometimes his mother was a bit envious when his father had cooked something special for which she did not have the time during the week. During the week, dishes that were more simple and quick to prepare were in demand, Theo maintains, whereas the preparation time is less important on the weekends. Being the main cook in his household, Theo is attentive to the different time resources for dishes during the week, and on weekends, and the gendered dimension often attached to this split, with men often cooking when there is more time or when the food is shared with guests, and appreciated. Nevertheless, Theo – like Thomas – asks his partner where certain items could be found in the kitchen, while he is preparing the food. Viktoria, who has spent the day with their child at home, has also done the shopping and will clean up the kitchen afterward.

Theo starts the go-along by sharpening his knife, “a small ritual,” he says. It was *very* important, he emphasized, that the kitchen is “reasonably clean” before he starts to cook. Otherwise, he could “not work *at all* (emphasized).” Theo enjoys cooking; we talk about his love for fresh produce, and he marvels about the olfactory pleasure of freshly grated lemon. When he tries something new, he would use a recipe; generally he did not follow recipes though, which was even “more fun,” as he would “enter a trance,” where he



would “not really think at all, what I am doing.” He enjoys “savoring, tasting, and adding some seasoning, making it better;” he would have less courage to do so when following a recipe and thus prefers not to. Theo is thus highlighting the pleasurable process rather than the goal of the chore. For Theo cooking is relaxing and creative.

Theo points out the learned skills and the knowledge he received from his mother as a child. He is also aware of the unequal demands and (time) resources that left his mother envious of his father’s cooking. Without specifying who does the cleaning of the kitchen, Theo is attentive to the state of cleanliness of this space. A clean kitchen is requisite for him to delight in the practice of cooking. A sharp kitchen knife and fresh produce are further ingredients that make his cooking experience enjoyable. Theo shares that the pleasure of the chore of cooking for him lies very much in the sensory experience of the practice (e.g. the smell). He loves the creativity and “fun” of experimenting, and can enter into a “trance” while cooking. In contrast to Michael who emphasized the rational component of tidying up, Theo’s pleasure of cooking is about not thinking so much, and focusing on the doing instead.

One thing that Theo shares with Stefan is the high importance they both ascribe to having a good kitchen knife. Stefan also starts the cooking session with sharpening the blades of his knife – a birthday present, engraved with his initials. Stefan, just as Theo, generally enjoys having good cooking equipment. Stefan also shares with me that in his sensory experience of cooking “the eye” was important; and that “a coherent/harmonious feeling”<sup>92</sup> was central to his practice, which includes having “the new, hot shit” (Stefan GA).

Stefan never helped his mother in the kitchen as a child. He did not learn how to cook in his family of origin, where the dominant purport was that “a man is out of place in the

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<sup>92</sup> Das Gefühl beim Kochen [...] muss einfach stimmig (emphasized) sein (Stefan GA).

kitchen.” When he moved out from home at 18 he “did not even make scrambled eggs” for himself. Stefan narrates that for the first short while out of the home he lived entirely off frozen pizza; a situation that soon came to an impasse, and he and a male friend in a similar situation decided that they had to learn how to cook, in order to be able to “feed themselves.” The two young men bought several cookbooks and – for the social aspect, as Stefan says, – started inviting over some of their friends each week for whom they cooked together.

A few years back Stefan and some of his friends also initiated an all-male cooking evening. The friends in this “men’s cooking circle” met once a month, taking turns at preparing dinner for the group. “That’s always quite fun.” Stefan tells me that besides them sharing good food and wine together, the dinners also have a “competitive character.” The meals prepared are challenging, and composed of several courses that are “reviewed most critically” by the others over dinner. The main goal, Stefan maintains, is to prepare meals “as elaborate and pompous as possible” to impress the others. While not being explicitly scrutinized, it was also noticed if someone was generally clumsy and unskillful, or well versed in the kitchen. When it was his turn Stefan would try to do the grocery shopping already the day before, and prepare a schedule for him to be on track with his cooking: at what time something would have to rest in the fridge; or to allow for the appropriate rising of dough. Two of the friends in the cooking circle were cooking before the project started, the rest, Stefan asserts, were incited by the competition.

Apart from the monthly cooking “competition,” Stefan’s aim is to feed his family regularly, with basic dishes – often pasta or risotto. He and his partner Sibylle, who according to Stefan was clearly the better cook between the two, want to have “fresh and healthy food that also tastes like something;” they try to avoid frozen food or things that have traveled far. At the time of the go-along Stefan is on parental leave. While on leave,

he says he cooks daily for his child – who is asleep during the go-along, but later eats with us – and himself, and also makes sure that there is food for when his partner returns from work; for the go-along, he also cooks “a standard dish” for me. Stefan seems very much at ease in his kitchen, which was specially built to match his height. He finds cooking “mostly very relaxing,” and adds that it would be even more relaxing without the fear that the child will wake up any minute and “demand an interruption.” Stefan also liked to cook in the evening after his paid work, he says. While the performance of the chore of preparing a meal demanded a certain amount of concentration, and a focus on what he is doing, it was this focus on one thing only that Stefan felt relaxes him. “Everything else blurs, or is not as present;” and he would not be thinking about work, for instance. Stefan enjoys cutting vegetables, “a pleasant activity.” He was also fond of the feeling triggered in him by something – for instance, fresh chanterelles – sizzling in the hot pan; especially because of the corresponding pleasant smells. “Well, I like that [smell] a lot. And, then you know it’s about to start (laughs).” Stefan thus also knows about his particular sensory experience of cooking. While he started to cook as a young adult in order to “feed himself,” his skills now also extend to feeding his family with “fresh and healthy” food. While he enjoys the social aspect of the competitive cooking circle with his male friends, Stefan can also relax when cooking after a day at the office.

Stefan actively acquired the necessary knowledge and skills for cooking as a young adult. That he valorizes the embodied knowledge he has about cooking is not least brought home in the interactions between him and his male friends who cook for each other: they “impress” each other with their virtuosity in the preparation of highly complex meals. Apart from the quality of these cooking outcomes, it is also important to not appear “clumsy” in the process of preparation. In Stefan’s cooking practice attentiveness towards the origin of the produce (e.g. that it was not frozen, or traveled far) is central.

Like Theo, Stefan cherishes the sensory process of cooking in which “everything else blurs,” and he focuses his attention on the practice: enjoying cutting vegetables, or the smells accompanying something sizzling in the hot pan. Being on parental leave at the time of the go-along, Stefan also learns about and becomes responsive to, the different, simultaneous demands of being a parent. He acknowledges that it was easier only to focus on the cooking itself, without worrying about being interrupted by his child waking up from a nap. Moreover, responsiveness to his partner’s needs forms part of Stefan’s current cooking practice, as he makes sure that a meal is prepared for when Sibylle comes home from work.

Within the hierarchy of domestic tasks cooking takes a position of relatively high value. The skills involved in the chore are more easily visible to many people than those required for other tasks. Both the process of cooking, often described as “meditative” by those mastering the requisite skills, and even more the “outcome” of a well-prepared, homemade meal, are valued. The hype of TV cooking shows in the past decade has certainly contributed to making home cooking visible, and valuable and has furthered men’s involvement in the kitchen. The idea of a TV show hosting a competition in doing the laundry, or cleaning floors, in contrast, seems like a weird, laughable idea. Nevertheless, being confronted with “dirty” toilets, clothes, or floors is something that most people – at least at a certain degree of pollution – will find deeply unpleasant. So there must also be value in cleaning them. Most women in my sample did find (parts of) household cleaning pleasurable, yet did not want to perform all the cleaning *for* their partners. The men in my sample either did not state that they enjoyed cleaning, or explicitly said that they did not like it. Within a frame in which reproductive work is ascribed low value, to find pleasure in domestic work is to end up on the losing side. This denotes a considerable obstacle for the valorization of domestic labor.

Jakob, like other participants in the study, generally found the enjoyment of cleaning to be a bit weird; Jakob strongly associated what he called a “mania for cleaning” (Jakob II, ln 772) with women. The only “cleaning” that Jakob found worthwhile was to clean his sports equipment. This, Jakob emphasizes, is “the only cleaning, that I deliberately, like to do- or- well I don’t necessarily like it – but, I know it’s for maintenance of the material,” “because [it all] costs a hell lot of money” (Jakob GA). That is, the focus is clearly set on the goal, rather than the process of cleaning itself.

While also an avid cook, for his go-along Jakob chose to clean the bathroom floor with a steam broom. His demonstration of this electrical appliance for cleaning tiles has the character of a funny performance, a show put on for me. Despite this fact, Jakob’s attentiveness towards the concrete materiality of their domestic space and the dirty matter in it is very tangible in his practice. Jakob tells me that generally, he was more interested in the “gadget” side of household cleaning. He connects the fact that he favors technical appliances over mopping or wiping, with masculinity. When he and his partner Alice were still cleaning their apartment themselves, he had usually done the vacuum cleaning, and she would mop. “I always liked to do the vacuum cleaning, right” (Jakob II, ln 518-519). And, he asserts, “I also think that I have done that much more thoroughly, and meticulously (.) uh, than Alice” (ibid., ln 519-520). His father would find vacuum cleaning fun too, and Jakob speculates their preference might have to do with the association of “machines and men (smiles)”<sup>93</sup> (ibid., ln 176). In any case, Jakob did “prefer vacuum-cleaning over cleaning” (ibid., ln 179), thereby singling out those chores

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<sup>93</sup> Besides this gendered association of tasks with modern technology versus corporeality, I want to refer to Shireen Ally (2013), who examines the racialized connotations implicit in ads for detergents in the South African context. Ally shows how advertisement targeting black South Africans emphasized on the manual washing of laundry, in the construction of the black woman as housewife and consumer. In contrast, the portrayal of the detergent/washing machine assemblage marketed to the white South African audience focuses on technology and, Ally argues, can be read as “cleaning” the white colonial household from the “polluting” dependence on black laboring hands, and thus (racialized) corporeality.

associated with “technology” – and masculinity – as a different kind of domestic work. Jakob mentions that the steam broom was something his mother had bought at some stage and then entrusted to him.

There were several points in my interactions with Jakob where he was attentive towards his domestic space and dirty matter in that space. Both in the go-along, and in his individual interview, this attentiveness is most strikingly brought to the fore by Jakob in his precise description of his practice using the steam-broom. In the first interview, Jakob tells me about the steam broom and that it was handy especially in winter when he would use it to clean the tiles in the foyer of their apartment, as this was a place where dirt is easily brought in from the streets. In the go-along, while using the steam broom in the bathroom, Jakob adds to this dirty matter brought in from the streets – especially in the cold and wet season when sludge can be found on Vienna’s pavements – other specific kinds of dirt towards which he is attentive. There is the particular dirt distributed around their pets’ indoor toilet. Another kind of smallish dirt, which could be cleaned away using the steam broom are the little speckles of toothpaste clinging to the bathroom floor – that just by “mopping the floor wet often cannot be removed” (Jakob GA). Without the steam broom, Jakob asserts, “Yes, you often have to scratch them off the floor.” Finally, there are also little splatters of food on the kitchen floor that make their way there from pots and pans, when Jakob and his partner cook.

When it comes to domestic cleaning Jakob ostensibly prioritizes cleaning outcomes over the related processes. He tends to exclude chores that he either does not mind or codes as masculine from domestic work.<sup>94</sup> Jakob’s portrayal of his domestic cleaning activities is gendered as masculine through emphasizing his practices involve technical

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<sup>94</sup> In his individual interview, Jakob explicitly excludes masculine coded handicraft activities from domestic work “because [for them] you need tools” (Jakob II, ln 614-615). Again cf. Rosie Cox’ (2010) analysis of the ascription of skills to outsourced masculine-coded maintenance work versus feminine-coded household work.

appliances. In contrast to other men who grant their lack of skills, he claims a high level of competence – supposedly vacuuming more thoroughly than his partner, Alice. Jakob's attentiveness towards the specificity of different kinds of dirt (e.g. toothpaste on the bathroom floor, splatters of food on the kitchen floor, the dirt from pets or that brought in from the streets) becomes very tangible in the go-along. These distinct forms of attentiveness of dirt and the knowledge and skills needed to clean the dirt away, is facilitated by, or emerges out of the practices of cleaning themselves.

In this section, I have highlighted the multiplicity of forms of attentiveness and responsiveness taken by the men in my study towards different aspects of domestic chores, and towards messiness and specific kinds of dirt. I have shown that attentiveness and responsiveness are skills that partly emerge through practice and are learned in context.

In her work on sensory experiences and the constitution of identity through the everyday practice of doing the laundry, Sarah Pink (2005) shares the stories of three people living in the UK. Mario, Margaret, and Helen have different “biographical relationships with laundry,” and differing “sensory knowledge, practices and strategies they employ in the private sphere to produce their desired laundry results” (287). Margaret enjoys doing the laundry and is being ridiculed by her family when she continues to do this chore while on holidays in a foreign apartment. Her daughter Helen, a mother, wife and part-time company director “running on a domestic ‘hamster wheel’, [...] regarded the satisfaction she derived from laundry as ‘sad’” (288). Helen describes her laundry practice to Pink as follows:

I always use... some sort of softener, and even when they've been in the tumble dryer I do like that smell, but I do like it when they've been on the

line... [although] I don't like ironing them so much when they've been on the line... I've fetched some [laundry] in today when I got in from work, and they've obviously been out there all day and they were all stiff and got more creases in, whereas when they're in the tumble dryer it's a doddle really. If you just catch them in time and they're just so easy to iron. Yes, I do like my clothes to smell nice. I definitely think about the feel of them though... once I've ironed them they feel better (275).

I am interested in the question of what exactly it is that makes Helen's pleasure in doing the laundry a "sad" experience. If it is work that needs to be done, why is it sad that she also likes doing it? What circumstances affect her joy also to be sad? Is it that by voicing her joy, she will automatically be expected to perform disproportionate amounts of it, leaving her less time for other important (paid) work, and leisure time? Or is her joy "just" embarrassing given the devaluation of reproductive work, especially laundry work. I suggest that skills and preferences are themselves partly shaped by the gendered norms and expectations one encounters in the learning process, and I want to speculate that a possible interpretation for Helen's sadness is indeed the specific context that makes her pleasure partly unpleasant. Enjoying laundry work is "sad," only within a context that does not consider this important work as valuable and maintains an association between the devalued work and the social stigma attached to people performing this little-appreciated labor. As it is gendered and racialized subjects that are deemed "suitable" for this devalued work, it is "sad" to find pleasure in it.<sup>95</sup>

I argue that the valorization of domestic and care work needs to go hand in hand with a radically different distribution of said work across genders, races, and ethnicities. I claim that certain forms of attentiveness and responsiveness as embodied knowledge can only,

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<sup>95</sup> In the interview I conducted with Anelia and her mother Fidan, who both work in domestic cleaning, Anelia expressed that she was really not particularly fond of domestic cleaning. Of course, it does not follow from this, that all people working in this sector would share Anelia's opinion.



or at least more easily, emerge out of praxis. Those structurally “privileged” in the current organization – white men, and, in a different way, white women – need to develop attentive, and responsive domestic practices, and become responsible for their own “dirt,” because these practices open up potentials to learn; the content of this learning has ethical, epistemic, and political ramifications. Buffered by Hanlon’s analysis, which also finds benefits *and* drawbacks in not performing reproductive work, I moreover add that a more gender equal distribution is necessary for the sake of all genders, and not just for women, as men also gain from doing domestic and care work.

*Attentiveness and Responsiveness as Creative Potentials: Towards a Transformative Politics of Domestic Work.*

I argue that engaging in one’s own laundry, cleaning, or cooking practices has important implications for social justice. In order to take responsibility for the reproductive work each and every one of us requires, we need to be(come) attentive to what needs to be done first. This means being attentive to what exactly one’s own domestic demands and desires entail and to acquire the skills needed. Domestic skills, including attentiveness and responsiveness, are more easily appreciated once one has experienced the embodied process of domestic reproduction. We also need to become responsive to how important aspects of ourselves, individually and collectively, largely remain invisible and ignored within public discourse. Thus, performing domestic work can broaden one’s horizon, and transforms one’s perspective. By doing so, it can make more easily accessible embodied knowledge not only about domestic and care work itself, and the lack of appreciation assigned to it, but also awareness of how damaging the current, unequal distribution of said work is for all of us. As Hanlon maintains, the emergence of empathy and solidarity is facilitated through the work of care.

Except for Theo, who learned from his mother and also had a male role model in his cooking father, the respondents in my study told me that they had *not* learned the requisite skills for household work, because they had hardly done any domestic chores as children. Now we can assume that their children will do even less domestic work since their parents outsource parts of it. Besides not learning about the actual skills involved, this lack of knowledge comes in tandem with active knowledge. These substantive epistemic practices emerge through the corporeal, cognitive, and affective experience of who does this “dirty work” within their households and is thus deemed “suitable” to do so – “other” women; racialized and feminized subjects.

The pattern of outsourcing, I claim, will in this way also intricately and subtly socialize the children in outsourcing households to grow up with learning about their place within the larger system. The cognitive and embodied knowledge and the transmission of affects within their households connect these home-spaces to broader, asymmetrical global relations. It is in this way that I claim that outsourcing damages social bonds and pushes further the low value ascribed to domestic work through a downward spiral of the devaluation of work and the degradation of the workers.

But there is hope. The caring men in Hanlon’s study described analogous experiences to those of women in the same structural conditions. The men felt isolation, but were also able to empathize with the burdens experienced by many women who care; they acknowledged the invisibility and undervaluation of the reproductive labor and appreciated the worth of the work. *Doing* reproductive work alters what we know and can change out ethical commitments.

Becoming responsive and responsible for one’s own domestic cleaning is important. However, I claim that it will not suffice. We need to distribute domestic responsibilities

more equitably on a large scale and create institutions that back up a caring perspective; we need to create what Joan Tronto calls *caring democracies* (2013). If more people who are “privileged” by carelessness in the current distribution of work experienced the burdens *and* benefits of domestic and care work, hopefully this would trigger a change in broader societal structures: a transformative politics of reproductive work.

I see my analysis in this chapter as a potential starting point for more research that I will hopefully get to do in the future into the epistemic (and ethical) implications and political potentials that “low” domestic work such as doing the laundry, or cleaning work holds.



## Conclusion

Dealing with our own dirt brings us face to face with our own materiality, it is a very direct connection to the natural world and our place within it. Without this connection we tread more heavily on the earth and often upon other people. [...] [P]eople who never clean up after themselves [...][,] can engage in conducts and (un)ethical practices to produce themselves because their effects on the world and on others are invisible to them (Cox 2016, 15).

I fully agree with Rosie Cox assessment in the above quote. As I have shown throughout this thesis, I perceive responsibility to be emerging out of responsiveness to our human interconnectedness. If we are not responsive to the fact that we are – always – interdependent and interrelated with human and non-human others (what is propagated by the modern myth of containment, and the idea of the bounded, independent self), irresponsible practices follow that sever social bonds, and ultimately lead to injustice and human and nonhuman destruction. To counter this movement requires praxis. I argue that embodied attentiveness and responsiveness are skills out of which responsible practices and structures of responsibility can emerge.

I began my project with the aim to bring the positions of white, heterosexual, middle-class men as embodied agents within outsourcing households, and their practices, into the

academic research on the international division of reproductive labor. Of course, the thesis that has emerged out of this question, or aim, developed to be much more encompassing. I shall retrace the main themes here.

Starting from a critique of the dominant Western concept of the modern individual as independent or isolated, I drew on alternative feminist post-colonial and critical race conceptions that perceive humans as relational and interdependent as well as affectively permeable. I argued that the myth of containment prevalent in the modern West strengthens non-responsive practices and aids the reproduction of asymmetrical and unjust structures within the organization of domestic work that “ignores” the interconnected nature of humans (and human suffering and pleasure). Thus, I claimed that our underlying understandings of what we are as humans also importantly shapes the way reproductive work is perceived; it shapes the way this work is felt, organized and carried out. Starting from alternative conceptions of the human individual I hence extended the argument that how we “feel” and see ourselves as shaping the way we respond and relate to each other. I argued that this logic can also be applied to the international division of domestic work as feminized and racialized. My main point, then, was that not acknowledging or valuing existing relationships leads to a specific, learned, form of ignorance. This, in turn, makes practices of responsibility impossible, and establishes and reproduces structural inequality.

Through my small-scale empirical study in Vienna, I have fleshed out how individual men and women navigate the heteronormative, white-supremacist patriarchal system, which structurally privileges white middle-class men, and – in a different way – their female partners, in the organization of reproductive labor. I wanted to make tangible how men and women who fit this abstract position – white, heterosexual, middle-class – shape and are shaped by larger societal structures.

The fact that power asymmetries between the differently situated agents (along the axis of gender, race, ethnicity and class) are central in the contemporary organization of domestic and care work, led me to focus on these unequal relations. Starting from relational conceptions of individuals, I follow other feminist theorist (Nedelsky 2011; Weir 2013) and do not take relationships as such as benign.

Elaborating on the entanglement of interconnectedness, power and responsiveness, I made tangible how “privileged irresponsibility” (Tronto 1993, 121) is formed and perpetuated in practice. I argued that objectification (wedded with abjection) of domestic work and its workforce are underpinned by an “epistemology of separation” (Collins 1991), an ideologically invested epistemology of a strong subject/object split present in the either/or thinking. Besides separating subject and object, I emphasized that this split also lets the energetic and affective connections between humans and their surrounding environment drop out of sight. Alternative epistemologies, advocating both/and orientations (Collins 1991), or celebrating the resistance to the dominant epistemological paradigm in the productive “messiness” inherent in separation itself (Lugones, 1994), do not propel hierarchical power relations in the way that an epistemology of separation does.

I discussed that the transmission of affects is central to understanding more fully how the domestic workers are impacted by colonial and racist legacies and gendered norms emotionally, viscerally and corporeally. I moreover argued that the employers are also affected by the geopolitical and economic inequalities within which the encounters between the differently situated agents are embedded – even if they are not present while the domestic workers clean their homes. Affective “spill-over” that emerged for some employers as feelings of guilt is one such affective effect of privileged irresponsibility. If

we can establish a productive reading of these negative affects, and take them as indicating a possible start for new action, I claimed that we could turn feelings of guilt into a positive potential for transformation. (While I have emphasized the possibility of change inherent in feelings of guilt, I have fallen short of examining in detail the conditions necessary for these possibilities to be actualized: that can turn guilt into a change of attitude and behavior. I suggest further examination in future research of these promising, missing threads in my thesis.)

After maintaining that as situated knowers our specific social locations and our practices and experiences shape our knowledge formation processes, I elaborated on the tie of responsiveness as a relational praxis of situated knowers and patterns of unequal relations of power. Later, this brought me into the terrain of epistemic ignorance, in which the incompetence to perceive certain things can be an advantage of/for the structurally privileged. To remain or become ignorant – in a pernicious and reliable way – must here be seen not as a lack of knowledge, but as substantive epistemic practices. I introduce my notion of “semipermeable membranes” that is essentially a thinking together of relational, affective and “affectable” – permeable, not bounded – selves, with the idea that individuals are not arbitrarily responsive to connection. The epistemic notion of semipermeability thus connects the ideology of non-permeability (that is the belief in the myth of containment and a strong subject/object split) with the non-accidental structures of responsiveness that are also shaped by broader raced and gendered (et cetera) scripts. The notion of “tolerance of dirt” (*Schmutztoleranz*), I argued, emerges out of (gendered) socialized inattentiveness, and privileged non-responsiveness to connection. The neologism of the “*Schmutztoleranzgrenze*,” that my respondents used to describe a phenomenon of inattentiveness to dirt that was interlinked with certain dominant notions of masculinity, is – I argued – an epistemic category. I thus discussed how our



conceptions of human permeability, in tandem with our ethical orientations, structure perception, and shape our individual and collective *semipermeable* membranes.

An epistemology of ignorance, I claimed, is an epistemology that structurally and violently fails to perceive existing connections. Trying to strengthen a counter-narrative to the dominant epistemology of separation and the bounded, isolated self, I emphasized the permeable condition of human selves and human communities. And, I argued, in order to create and maintain the good relations that are indispensable for human and nonhuman flourishing, the work of care is required.

This led me to the call for action with which I ended this thesis. I discussed the implications of actually *doing* reproductive work. Especially privileged men, who in the current organization of reproductive labor carry out substantially less domestic and care work than women, have to engage in domestic and care work in order to change the division of said work substantially. As political theorists have argued, a different distribution of reproductive work is pivotal in regard to its democratic effect (Tronto 2013). Besides these broader positive consequences, research from the field of masculinity studies shows the individual benefits of caregiving for men's wellbeing (Hanlon 2012). Highlighting the nature of this work as potentially burdensome *and* pleasurable, I argued that performing reproductive work, including domestic cleaning, facilitates the emergence of attentive and responsive embodied practices and thus aids the development of responsibility. Having embodied knowledge about the skills involved in domestic and care work, and experiencing the conditions under which this devalued work is performed, I maintain, will help in a broader effort to valorize said work. I thus argued for the emotional, ethical and epistemic effects of doing domestic work that can counter epistemic ignorance in this realm, and be seen as the building grounds for a transformative politics of reproductive work.

In this thesis, I emphasized that I see the face-to-face interactions within private households as influenced by and influencing the larger patterns within which they are situated. Seeing the different levels of households, nation states and global relations as co-constituting in this way, I maintain that solutions to the injustice prevalent within the outsourcing of domestic and care work will have to happen on different levels too. I showed how privileged irresponsibility – that is, the “privilege” not to care – is made and remade in everyday interactions; and in doing so, I emphasized its changeability. It was central to me to make tangible potentials for transformation in social interaction, be it affective “spill-over,” in the form of feelings of guilt that I highlighted in Chapter 4, or the embodied attentiveness and responsiveness, individual men are already practicing that I discussed in Chapter 6. I have argued that individual action is important, but that in order to change our societies for the better, collective efforts will be required. I see the transformative politics of reproductive work that I have advocated for in this thesis, in which a radically different distribution of reproductive labor among all (races, genders, ethnicities, and classes) is on the agenda, and that goes hand in hand with a valorization of domestic and care work as part of a larger project of social justice – to work towards more caring societies.

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# APPENDIX

## **Research participants**

Jakob works as an entrepreneur. He has no children. Michael, Stefan and Thomas all work in different segments of finance. Michael has no children. Stefan and Thomas are both fathers; they both are on parental leave, or about to start their leave at the time of the research. Theo works in communication and innovation; he has one child and took parental leave from his paid job prior to the research.

Alice works in a social profession. She has no children. Doris is a student at the time of the interview and also has no children. Frances works in public relations. She has one child; at the time of the interview she is on parental leave. Sibylle also has one child. She is on parental leave at the time of the first interview, and later in the research re-enters her occupation in the healthcare sector. Viktoria works in telecommunications. She is on parental leave with her first child at the time of the research.



Human Research Ethics Committee  
**Committee Approval Form**

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** Prof Allison Weir

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher:** : Ms Ulrike Prattes (HDR student)

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

What have men got to do with it? Towards a transformative politics of reproductive work.

**for the period:** 31/12/2014

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** 2014 68N

**Special Condition/s of Approval**

**Prior to commencement of your research**, the following permissions are required to be submitted to the ACU HREC:

The data collection of your project has received ethical clearance but the decision and authority to commence may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process and approval is subject to ratification at the next available Committee meeting. The Chief Investigator is responsible for ensuring that outstanding permission letters are obtained, interview/survey questions, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to ACU HREC before any data collection can occur. Failure to provide outstanding documents to the ACU HREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research. Further, this approval is only valid as long as approved procedures are followed.

Clinical Trials: You are required to register it in a publicly accessible trials registry prior to enrolment of the first participant (e.g. Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry <http://www.anzctr.org.au/>) as a condition of ethics approval.

It is the Principal Investigators / Supervisors responsibility to ensure that:

1. All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC with 72 hours.
2. Any changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the HREC by submitting a Modification/Change to Protocol Form prior to the research commencing or continuing. <http://research.acu.edu.au/researcher-support/integrity-and-ethics/>
3. Progress reports are to be submitted on an annual basis. <http://research.acu.edu.au/researcher-support/integrity-and-ethics/>
4. All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Letter and consent form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.
5. Protocols can be extended for a maximum of five (5) years after which a new application must be submitted. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

Researchers must immediately report to HREC any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol eg: changes to protocols or unforeseen circumstances or adverse effects on participants.

*K. Pashley*

Signed: .....

.....

Date: .... 5/04/2016.....

(Research Services Officer, Australian Catholic University, Tel: 02 9739 2646)

**NOTE:**

The actual participant information letter will be translated into German by the researcher.



## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER**

**PROJECT TITLE: Men and the domestic realm**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Prof Allison Weir**

**STUDENT RESEARCHER: MA Ulrike Prattes**

**STUDENT'S DEGREE: PhD**

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

***What is the project about?***

The research project aims to portray the daily domestic routines within heterosexual couples households who employ domestic workers. Questions about the different tasks and activities of the various actors, but also about individual well being within various arrangements will be posed. In short: the study aims for a holistic portrayal of the routines of men and women in outsourcing households as well as of domestic workers.

In the scholarly, as well as in the popular media discourse, men's positions and practices at home are often portrayed over simplistic. In trying to close this gap this study will particularly focus on the position of men within the home space.

Although individual experiences will be examined, the aim of the study is to deduct larger social patterns of what works for the participants and what does not.

***Who is undertaking the project?***

This project is being conducted by Ulrike Prattes and will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Australian Catholic University under the supervision of Prof Allison Weir.

***Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?***

This research was designed in a manner that cancels potential risks.

***What will I be asked to do?***

Men from outsourcing households will be asked to participate in two individual interviews with the researcher, one joint interview together with their partner, as well as a more practice based research phase in form of a "go-along" (approximately 4-6 hours in total). In a "go-along" the male participants pick a domestic chore they perform routinely (e.g. cooking, doing the laundry etc), and carry out said task while the researcher "goes along" with them, asking questions every now and then about the process.

Women from outsourcing households will be asked to participate in one individual interview with the researcher, as well as one joint interview with their partners (approximately 2-3 hours in total). It will be at the discretion of the respective couple to decide if the female partner is also present at the go-along with male participants.

**NOTE:**

The actual participant information letter will be translated into German by the researcher.



Domestic workers will be asked to participate in one interview with the researcher (approximately one hour).

The interviews and other qualitative research procedures in this study will be audio recorded and will take place in the private homes of the participants, or at a mutually convenient location.

There will be no compensation in the form of money or goods offered to the participants.

***What are the benefits of the research project?***

The project aims at a differentiated analysis of the way home-space is used and housework is split in heterosexual couples households in Vienna that employ domestic workers. This holistic approach that engages all of these actors (men and women in outsourcing households as well as domestic workers) in a qualitative study is so far missing and holds promising insights into what is important for the well being of all individuals involved.

***Can I withdraw from the study?***

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences.

***Will anyone else know the results of the project?***

Confidentiality will be ensured for the participants. Results from the study that are published in the researchers' Doctoral Thesis as well as in relevant publications, or presented to other researchers (e.g. in Conference presentations) will appear only in anonymised form that does not identify the participants in any way.

The audio recordings of the research process will not be accessible to anyone but the researcher who will transcribe them herself. The typewritten version will be anonymised and will not include the participants' names or other identifiers. Digital transcripts will be password protected, paper copies will be stored in a locked cabinet and destroyed 5 years after the completion of the degree.

***Will I be able to find out the results of the project?***

The results of the project will be accessible via the Doctoral Thesis of the Ulrike Prattes as well as in relevant publications.

***Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?***

If you would like to pose questions or raise concerns about any part of this study please contact the researcher by email or phone at [uuprat001\(at\)myacu.edu.au](mailto:uuprat001(at)myacu.edu.au) or +43(0)6506362364

***What if I have a complaint or any concerns?***

The study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University (review number 2014 68N). If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of the project, you may write to the Manager of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research).

Manager, Ethics  
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)



**NOTE:**

The actual participant information letter will be translated into German by the researcher.



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North Sydney Campus  
PO Box 968  
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Ph.: 02 9739 2519  
Fax: 02 9739 2870  
Email: [res.ethics@acu.edu.au](mailto:res.ethics@acu.edu.au)

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

***I want to participate! How do I sign up?***

To participate in the study please sign both copies of the consent form provided together with this information letter. Please retain one of the forms for your own records and return the other one to Ulrike Prattes.

Yours sincerely,  
Ulrike Prattes

**RESEARCHER NAME/S AND SIGNATURE/**



## INFORMATIONSBLETT FÜR TEILNEHMER/INNEN

**PROJEKTTITEL: Männer und der häusliche Bereich**

**BETREUERIN: Prof. Allison Weir**

**AUSFÜHRENDE FORSCHERIN: Mag. Ulrike Prattes**

**ANGESTREBTER TITEL: Doktor der Philosophie**

Liebe Teilnehmerin, lieber Teilnehmer,

Sie sind eingeladen, am nachfolgend beschriebenen Forschungsprojekt teil zu nehmen.

### ***Worum geht es im Projekt?***

Im Forschungsprojekt geht es darum, die alltäglichen häuslichen Routinen in heterosexuellen Paar-Haushalten abzubilden, in denen HausarbeiterInnen tätig sind. Es werden Fragen nach konkreten Tätigkeiten im Haushalt sowie nach dem Wohlbefinden der unterschiedlichen Akteure im Haus gestellt. Kurz: die Studie setzt sich zum Ziel, ein ganzheitliches Bild der Routinen von Männern und Frauen in Haushalten, die Hausarbeit "zukaufen", und jener Personen, die diese Arbeit leisten, zu erstellen.

Im wissenschaftlichen wie auch im medialen Diskurs werden die Situationen und Handlungen von Männern zu Hause oft allzu simpel dargestellt. Dieser Tendenz soll in der vorliegenden Studie entgegengewirkt werden, indem der Fokus gezielt auf die Positionen von Männern innerhalb des häuslichen Bereichs gelegt wird.

### ***Wer führt das Projekt durch?***

Diese Studie wird von Ulrike Prattes durchgeführt und stellt die Basis für den Titel Doktor der Philosophie an der Australischen Katholischen Universität unter der Betreuung von Prof. Allison Weir dar.

### ***Besteht irgendeine Gefahr bei der Teilnahme an diesem Projekt?***

Nein. Die Forschung wurde so konzipiert, dass für die TeilnehmerInnen keinerlei Risiko besteht.

### ***Was wird von mir verlangt werden?***

Männer aus den Paar-Haushalten werden gebeten an zwei Einzelinterviews, einem gemeinsamen Paar-Interview sowie an einer stärker praxisbezogenen Forschungsphase in Form eines „go-along“ teil zu nehmen (insgesamt 4-6 Stunden Zeitaufwand). Beim „go-along“ wählen die Teilnehmer eine Aufgabe im Haushalt aus, die sie selbst regelmäßig durchführen (zum Beispiel Kochen, Waschen etc), und führen diese

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Tätigkeit in Begleitung der Forscherin aus, die von Zeit zu Zeit Fragen über den Prozess stellt.

Die weiblichen Teilnehmerinnen werden gebeten an einem Einzelinterview sowie einem gemeinsamen Interview mit ihrem Partner Teil zu nehmen (insgesamt 2-3 Stunden Zeitaufwand). Es wird dem jeweiligen Paar überlassen, ob die Partnerin in der Zeit des „go-along“ ebenfalls anwesend ist.

Die Interviews sowie die übrigen praktischen Forschungsphasen in dieser Studie werden mittels Tonbandaufzeichnung aufgenommen und finden entweder bei den TeilnehmerInnen zu Hause oder einem anderen für alle passenden Ort statt.

Die Teilnahme wird nicht in Form von Geld oder anderen Gütern abgegolten.

***Was ist der Nutzen dieses Forschungsprojekts***

Die Studie will ein differenziertes Bild davon erstellen, wie heterosexuelle Paare in Wien, die HausarbeiterInnen beschäftigen, ihr zu Hause nutzen und wie Hausarbeit organisiert wird. Bislang gibt es keine Studie, die einen ganzheitliche Ansatz verfolgt, der alle Akteure berücksichtigt (das sind Männer und Frauen in den Paar-Haushalten sowie HausarbeiterInnen). Dementsprechend verspricht die praktische Studie tiefere Einblicke darin, was für das Wohlbefinden aller Beteiligten wichtig ist.

***Kann ich aus der Studie aussteigen?***

Die Teilnahme an dieser Studie ist absolut freiwillig. Sie sind in keiner Weise zur Teilnahme verpflichtet. Wenn Sie sich bereit erklären mitzumachen, können Sie dennoch jederzeit aussteigen, ohne dass dies negative Konsequenzen für Sie hat.

***Wird jemand anderes die Ergebnisse dieser Forschung erfahren?***

Vertraulichkeit wird für alle TeilnehmerInnen sichergestellt. Die Ergebnisse der Studie werden ausschließlich in anonymisierter Form, in der Einzelpersonen nicht identifiziert werden können, in die Doktorarbeit der Forscherin einfließen oder anderen ForscherInnen präsentiert werden (beispielsweise auf Konferenzen).

Die Tonbandaufnahmen werden lediglich der Forscherin selbst zugänglich sein, die die Abschriften selbst anfertigt. Die maschinengeschriebenen Interviews werden bereits anonymisiert sein und weder die Namen noch andere Identifizierungsmerkmale der TeilnehmerInnen enthalten. Digitale Transkripte werden mittels Passwort geschützt, Ausdrucke auf Papier werden in einem versperren Kasten aufbewahrt und 5 Jahre nach Beendigung des Studiums zerstört.

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***Werde ich die Ergebnisse des Forschungsprojekts finden können?***

Die Ergebnisse der Studie werden in Form der Doktorarbeit von Ulrike Prattes und auch in anderen relevanten Publikationen auffindbar sein.

***Wem kann ich Fragen zu diesem Projekt stellen?***

Sollten Sie Fragen zum Projekt haben oder Bedenken dazu äußern wollen, wenden Sie sich bitte per Email ([uuprat001@myacu.edu.au](mailto:uuprat001@myacu.edu.au)) oder Telefon (0680/2465893) an die Forscherin.

***Wohin wende ich mich mit Beschwerden oder Bedenken?***

Diese Studie wurde durch die Ethik-Kommission (Human Research Ethics Committee) der Australischen Katholischen Universität geprüft (Prüfnummer: 2014 68N). Wenn Sie irgendwelche Beschwerden oder Bedenken deren Umsetzung betreffend haben, können Sie sich an die Leitung der Ethik-Kommission zu Händen des Büros des Rektors für Forschung wenden.

Manager, Ethics  
c/o Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)  
Australian Catholic University  
North Sydney Campus  
PO Box 968  
NORTH SYDNEY, NSW 2059  
Ph.: 02 9739 2519  
Fax: 02 9739 2870  
Email: [res.ethics@acu.edu.au](mailto:res.ethics@acu.edu.au)

Alle Beschwerden oder Bedenken werden vertraulich behandelt und vollständig überprüft. Sie werden über den Ausgang informiert.

***Ich möchte an der Forschung teilnehmen! Wie melde ich mich an?***

Um an der Studie Teil zu nehmen, unterschreiben Sie bitte beide Kopien des Informationsblattes. Behalten Sie eine Kopie für Ihre Unterlagen und geben Sie die andere Ulrike Prattes.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,  
Ulrike Prattes

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Gruppe 1  
Participant Group 1



EINVERSTÄNDISERKLÄRUNG  
CONSENT FORM  
*Kopie für die Forscherin / Kopie für den Teilnehmer*  
*Copy for Researcher/ Copy for Participant to Keep*

BETREUERIN: Prof Allison Weir  
SUPERVISOR

DURCHFÜHRENDE FORSCHERIN: MA Ulrike Prattes  
STUDENT RESEARCHER

TITEL DES PROJEKTS: Männer und der häusliche Bereich.  
TITLE OF PROJECT: Men and the domestic realm.

Ich, ....., habe das Informationsblatt für TeilnehmerInnen gelesen und verstanden. Etwaige Fragen meinerseits wurden zu meiner Zufriedenheit beantwortet. Ich stimme daher zu an dieser Studie teil zu nehmen. Meine Teilnahme beinhaltet zwei Einzelinterviews, ein Interview gemeinsam mit meiner Partnerin sowie ein "go-along", was zusammen einem ungefähren Zeitaufwand von 4-6 Stunden entspricht. Ich wurde darüber unterrichtet, dass Tonbandaufzeichnungen von allen Forschungsschritten angefertigt werden. Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass die im Rahmen dieser Studie gesammelten Daten in anonymisierter Form, in der ich als Person nicht identifiziert werden kann, veröffentlicht und/oder mit anderen ForscherInnen geteilt werden können. Ich kann meine Zustimmung jederzeit und ohne negative Konsequenzen widerrufen.

I (name) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study, which will entail my participation in two individual interviews, one joint interview together with my partner, and one "go-along" which will take in total between 4 and 6 hours. I understand that all of the research steps will be audio recorded. I agree that research data collected for this study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way. I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences.

NAME DES TEILNEHMERS .....  
NAME OF PARTICIPANT

UNTERSCHRIFT ..... DATUM.....  
SIGNATURE DATE

UNTERSCHRIFT DER BETREUERIN ..... DATUM .....  
SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR DATE

UNTERSCHRIFT DER FORSCHERIN ..... DATUM.....  
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE

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Gruppe 2  
Participant Group 2



EINVERSTÄNDNISERKLÄRUNG  
CONSENT FORM

*Kopie für die Forscherin / Kopie für die Teilnehmerin*  
*Copy for Researcher / Copy for Participant to Keep*

BETREUERIN: Prof Allison Weir  
SUPERVISOR

DURCHFÜHRENDE FORSCHERIN: MA Ulrike Prattes  
STUDENT RESEARCHER

TITEL DES PROJEKTS: Männer und der häusliche Bereich.  
TITLE OF PROJECT: Men and the domestic realm.

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NAME DER TEILNEHMERIN: .....  
NAME OF PARTICIPANT

UNTERSCHRIFT ..... DATUM.....  
SIGNATURE DATE

UNTERSCHRIFT DER BETREUERIN ..... DATUM .....  
SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR DATE

UNTERSCHRIFT DER FORSCHERIN ..... DATUM.....  
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER DATE

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Gruppe 3  
Participant Group 3



# EINVERSTÄNDNISERKLÄRUNG

CONSENT FORM

*Kopie für die Forscherin / Kopie für den/die TeilnehmerIn*

*Copy for Researcher/ Copy for Participant to Keep*

BETREUERIN: Prof Allison Weir  
SUPERVISOR

DURCHFÜHRENDE FORSCHERIN: MA Ulrike Prattes  
STUDENT RESEARCHER

TITEL DES PROJEKTS: Männer und der häusliche Bereich.  
TITLE OF PROJECT: Men and the domestic realm.

Ich, ....., habe das Informationsblatt für TeilnehmerInnen gelesen und verstanden. Etwaige Fragen meinerseits wurden zu meiner Zufriedenheit beantwortet. Ich stimme daher zu an dieser Studie teil zu nehmen. Meine Teilnahme beinhaltet ein ca. einstündiges Interview, das mittels Tonband aufgezeichnet wird. Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass die im Rahmen dieser Studie gesammelten Daten in anonymisierter Form, in der ich als Person nicht identifiziert werden kann, veröffentlicht und/oder mit anderen ForscherInnen geteilt werden können. Ich kann meine Zustimmung jederzeit und ohne negative Konsequenzen widerrufen.

I (name) have read and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study, which will entail my participation in one individual interview, which will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded. I agree that research data collected for this study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way. I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences.

NAME DES/DER TEILNEHMER/IN .....

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

UNTERSCHRIFT .....

SIGNATURE

DATUM.....

DATE

UNTERSCHRIFT DER BETREUERIN

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR.....

DATUM

DATE.....

UNTERSCHRIFT DER FORSCHERIN.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER

DATUM.....

DATE

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