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"Culprits at Home": Pitfalls and Opportunities in Research on Domestic Racists

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Abstract: Only a few anthropologists have conducted "anthropology at home" on racism and discussed their problems during research afterwards. Working on and with "offenders at home" can lead to challenges within the field and during the analysis. The objective of this article is to discuss my own theoretical and methodological approach as an "anthropologist at home" during my fieldwork with three different speech communities (two of them perceived as racist and one of them as anti-racist). The article will discuss the position of "anthropology at home" within the discipline as well as the approach of my research within this field: doing anthropology at home among majoritized sections of society. Highlighting three examples from my research interviews, I will describe the different problems of distance and proximity, antipathy, sympathy and empathy encountered in the empirical research phase. The article closes with thoughts for the researcher who plans to apply an anthropology-at-home approach with (potential) offenders and the theoretical implications for research in complex societies.

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1. Introduction

> "Auto-anthropology, that is anthropology carried out in the social context which produced it, in fact has a limited distribution. The personal credentials of the anthropologist do not tell us whether he/she is at home in this sense. But what he/she in the end writes, does" (STRATHERN, 1986, p.17).

The anti-racist ideological position of those researching groups of Neo-Nazis can be taken for granted in the case of most social scientists (BUTTERWEGGE, 1993, 1996; TAJFEL, 1982). Furthermore, working on racism or with racists within mainstream society or in majority contexts myself, it seemed to me to be crucial that the researcher holds a different position than the observed (see EVANS, 2006; GULLESTAD, 2002, 2004, 2008; PRINS, 2002; PRINS & SAHARSO, 2008). However, during my fieldwork I came to recognize that the

relationship between observer and observed is not that simple at all, especially in the case of racism. Several questions concerning the method applied in my PhD study surfaced after I had finished, especially during presentations at conferences, and at lectures or seminars. Questions like: How could you sympathize with racists? Anthropological fieldwork includes getting close to people, but how did you manage to create proximity to racists? What about the tensions between their and your own ideologies? [1]

What constitutes individually respectively universally valid —"knowledge" of—"the others" within the mainstream society of Austria? What difference-generating strategies do these assumptions rest upon? In which ways are these thoughts being communicated, and how are they contended and argued for or against? And finally, what roles do these mindsets play in the constitution of individuals and groups? These have been the main research aims to tackle along with the hypotheses about similarities and distinctions of various racist attitudes and communication strategies within the mainstream society of Austria. [2]

In this research, which concerns the similarities and differences between various racist and anti-racist attitudes and communication strategies, I examine why (anti-) racist attitudes and actions have a strong tendency to be amplified within speech communities (MORGAN, 2004)—a tendency that is a prerequisite for the perpetuation and reproduction of (anti-) racism. By utilizing this hypothesis, it was possible to elucidate some (in many ways similar) strategies used by individuals to position themselves within, respectively outside, racist and anti-racist groups in Austrian society. [3]

I have chosen this "open model" of speech communities as the underlying frame for my analysis of racism within groups, because people tend to take multiple positions, depending on their current context, surrounding, and, above all, their speech community. MORGAN's definition concentrates not only on groups with the same language:

> "Rather, the concept takes as fact that language represents, embodies, constructs, and constitutes meaningful participation in a society and culture. It also assumes that a mutually intelligible symbolic and ideological communicative system must be at play among those who share knowledge and practices about how one is meaningful across social contexts" (2004, p.3). [4]

Every human being operates in several speech communities and varies the selection of words and the way of talking, depending on the context. In this context not only the spoken word is essential, but also the reaction to the statements made. MORGAN's concept of speech communities is central in so far, as it is suitable for the interpretation and representation of societies characterized by diversity. It is essential for the understanding of human speech and opinion formation, as a speech community is a product of an ongoing interaction between people. [5]

To discuss and answer the identified research questions, three networks[1] (HANNERZ, 1990) of relationships were studied between 2006 and 2009 in Austria based on field research (LEGEWIE, 1995), narrative-episodic interviews (FLICK, 2007) and participant observation (FLICK, 2007) and analyzed by thematic coding and critical discourse analysis according to JÄGER (2004). The experiences of people in the field of culturalization and racism are stored in the form of narrative-episodic and semantic knowledge (FLICK, 2007, p.238). It is to be examined whether three networks of relationships—with very different backgrounds and strongly differing ideas about society and their tasks—really are so different, as being assumed at the beginning of this research. The socio-institutional contexts of the networks were a sports club, an NGO and a bar. The members within the three networks were connected primarily by friendship, sexual relationships, leisure and work. In these forms of relationships ideological issues are often negotiated intensely and in a form of the sincerity that does not occur in more superficial connections. [6]

Two networks had their base in Vienna area, the third network has been explored in a small town in the western province of Austria. Starting with the "snowball method" (SCHNELL, HILL & ESSER, 2008, p.300), the criterion for the short list of the key persons followed the *maximale Kontrastierung* [maximum variation sampling]. This procedure attempts, chosen on the basis of fixed, relevant criteria for the study as far apart as possible (LAMNEK, 1995, p.113) to detect the field and its vertices to approximate in a population. The criteria for this study were concentrated according to the research interests to the categories: origin, political affiliations, sex, economic privilege, education and place of residence (hierarchical order). An essential feature for the further selection of individuals was the richness of each interview and the possibilities of observation. [7]

During my fieldwork one of the most common statements I heard from my interlocutors with respect to racism was, "Of course I am no racist, but ... ."[2] Quite often, the worst racism followed these introductory remarks. The objective of this article is to discuss my own theoretical and methodological approach as an "anthropologist at home" but, as I will show, what I partially failed to accomplish was a strategy that Marcus BANKS and Andre GINGRICH have characterized as "empathy but not sympathy" (GINGRICH, 2006, p.209). [8]

The focus on the discursive practices of everyday racism is in some respects already a challenge to one main anthropological expectation—that of gaining as much proximity as possible to the subjects in the research fields and thus participating in their everyday routines. In the first part of this article I will therefore discuss the position of anthropology at home within the discipline and also the approach of my research within this field, that is, doing anthropology at home in majoritized sections of the society. Highlighting three examples from my research interviewees, the second part describes how different problems of distance and proximity arose in the phase of empirical research. The article

1 "The world has become one network of social relationships, and between its different regions there is a flow of meanings as well as of people and goods" (HANNERZ, 1990, p.237).

2 All my interlocutors knew from the beginning, that this research is about racism in Austria.

closes with a set of preparatory insights for researchers planning to apply an anthropology-at-home approach with (potential) offenders. [9]

2. "Anthropology at Home" and My Own Approach

> "Throughout the twentieth century, however, the distances between ethnologists and those they observed—once seen as 'informants'—have constantly decreased" (PEIRANO, 1998, p.105).

In an increasingly "small world," where "the other" cannot just be moved away—socially and geographically—the understanding of the legitimization of anthropology at home is still drifting apart (PEIRANO, 1998). Whether or not anthropology at home is accepted as a relevant part of the discipline still depends a great deal on different (discipline-) historical, structural, national and regional factors. Last but not least, it depends on individual scientists and their personal or scientific biases. [10]

In my opinion, the division of research into "abroad" and "at home" has become more and more indefensible because of the globalization of culture, the increasing number of people who have transnational identities and flexible belongings. Due to the growing mobility of researchers and research subjects, even the term "anthropology at home" becomes problematic. We might just end up being presented with the question actually posed by so many people living in the age of (late or) post-modernity, media and consumer culture, cyberspace and global interconnectedness: "What's home anyway?" The solution for researchers is obvious: Today, social and cultural anthropological research ought to investigate everywhere (GIORDANO, GREVERUS & RÖMHILD, 1999; JACKSON, 1987). However, it is not just a matter of geographical "home" but also of the social home of the observed and the observer (STRATHERN, 1986). You can have more in common with a fellow researcher living several thousand kilometers away than with a worker who is your neighbor. Therefore, the categories of "distance" and "proximity," of "connection" and "disconnection" are not only spatially but also socially relevant, and, in many regards, they might even be more relevant in this latter respect. [11]

Undeniably, an anthropology-at-home approach brings with it challenges and difficulties: for instance it is tricky to deal with the ascription through the interlocutors to whom you are thought to belong in the society. It is tricky when interlocutors ascribe to you an identity similar to their own. Furthermore, in all research, wherever it is takes place, that relationships build over time as part of sharing daily life does not mean that the researcher never feels discomfort at proximity: on the contrary, during field research outside of Europe I (and many other anthropologists) have at times felt the need to distance myself from those I sought to understand, for example because of their radical beliefs, to which I was profoundly opposed. However, the problem is that anthropological fieldwork at home interferes with and affects a very personal part of one's life: the permanent development of ideology, moral understanding and practice within social relations. [12]

In the case of my research, the decision to do anthropology at home was clear-cut, because as long as racism dominates public campaigns and discourses in many European countries at the beginning of the third millennium, anthropological disciplines repatriate to cultural criticism of "their own" societies (ZIPS, 2008, pp.139-140). [13]

From my perspective, one problem was the assumption by almost everybody within mainstream society, the scientific community, the political parties and the media that they were experts on racism and racist issues. Racism, "migrants" and "the other" affect almost all Austrians in their everyday lives, so they have much to say on the subject. This also relates to a widespread misconception about social anthropology, namely that the results exemplify little more than what could have been achieved with a bit of "common sense" (WATTS, 2011). This fact makes members of mainstream society ideal informants and research subjects in the field, but also huge skeptics along the way and especially where research results are concerned. To cope with this lack of ascribed expertise was, on the one hand, one of the challenges during my research and, on the other it is the special challenge for anthropology at home in majoritized groups. [14]

My own spatial and social proximity to the research field brought both advantages and disadvantages. Even if most of the time—because of my biography and personal positioning—it seemed easy to switch between the social classes and between city and countryside, it was, however, difficult to maintain the necessary distance to individuals and their ideological positions, especially to those people classified as racists and sexists. GINGRICH (2006) considers this not to be a problem in methodological terms, because in his view not having the same opinion as the respondent may prove useful for research: "Agreeing to disagree allows one to put some sceptical distance between ethnographer and 'natives'. In turn, this allows us to understand the natives' views, in a manner that Marcus Banks and I have characterised as empathy but not sympathy" (GINGRICH, 2006, p.209). [15]

The conditions for such an approach, however, are the reflection and application of one's own actions both inside and outside of the field, without necessarily conducting an auto-anthropology (STRATHERN, 1986; YOUNG & MENELEY, 2005). Indeed, the emotions mentioned in the quotation above—empathy and sympathy—often have fluid boundaries. They change during the research process and are not always easy to identify—as in the case of this research. People often think they know much about their own society. But this is a common pitfall. It is exactly this "secured" knowledge that has to be scrutinized the most (STRATHERN, 1986, pp.16ff.). Furthermore, as GULLESTAD states:

> "[...] we need to overcome the division between anthropology 'at home' and 'abroad'. This not only means to treat all contexts with equal methodological rigor and seriousness, but also to explore the many connections between Europe and the regions of the world where anthropologists have traditionally worked. Even anthropologists who work 'abroad' need the knowledge produced 'at home', because they necessarily view other ways of life through their own" (2008, p.10). [16]

3. Three Cases

> "Of course I do not identify with racist ideology, but ... ."

More than once I felt sympathy for almost every single person in the three speech communities I explored. This might seem elusive for a scientist with an explicitly anti-racist approach, but in this article I will explore and explain how people in the field of racism and anti-racism (and also scientists) tend to adopt multiple and contradictory positions (STRASSER, 2009, p.44), depending on their current context, surroundings and, above all, their speech communities. In my research this made my interviewees at different times and sometimes simultaneously my "companions," "accomplices," "opponents" and on occasion something in-between all these roles. This arose from my doubts concerning aspects of anti-racism as well as to conflicting issues within racism itself. Based on three cases (MARKOM, 2011) from my fieldwork in different speech communities, I shall now illustrate my experience of (partly) simultaneous distance and proximity, sympathy and empathy (GINGRICH, 2006, p.209), being inside and outside (GULLESTAD, 2008). [17]

3.1 Richard—and my empathy for a "sad racist"

I met Richard for the first time in a Viennese bar, where I was about to begin my research (he was one of my first interviewees in the context of the dissertation). He was a key player in one of the networks of relationships that I researched. He described himself publicly very loud, confident and as racist. He was an extrovert and therefore a striking man who claimed: "I'm not going to mince my words; I don't care"[3]. Such remarks lead to complex situations and sometimes conflict within his speech community and also in semi-public spaces. At our first meeting, it was not possible to overhear his racist and sexist statements about "foreigners," so I asked him for an interview. [18]

I was sitting with Richard in a *haute cuisine* restaurant, waiting for the first course. My interview partner had chosen this location and now I was in the awkward position of knowing that Richard actually could not afford places like this, but, as he explained to me, the chef, a friend of his, owed him a favor. As I came to learn weeks later, Richard—at that time unemployed—thought I had expected that he couldn't pay. Likewise, I found out later that he intended to impress me and to spend the night with me after the interview. [19]

Then, I was sitting in this restaurant, the recording device was on the table which didn't seem to bother him at all; on the contrary, he seemed to be fired up by that and enjoyed the attention. Soon, with a loud voice, he compelled the whole place to listen to his "heroic stories." Quickly he got on to the subject of "Tschuschen"[4] and "Bimbos"[5] and how he wanted to have nothing to do with them. Still, I

3 The following quotes were translated into English by the author.

4 "Tschusch" in Austrian German is a pejorative term for a member of a Slavic, a Southeast European or, less commonly, even a Turkish society.

thought, "great material for my dissertation" and offered encouragement by means of active speech (not that it would have been necessary). [20]

Richards aversion against intellectuals was not projected on me as he put it "you are one of us" because I talked to him in dialect. He felt very motivated by my attention and not only spoke louder, but also started to direct comments at the other diners. I was still excited and wondered if and when one of the other guests was going to complain or criticize the statements. Nothing like that happened. Although we reaped evil looks and the shaking of heads, none of those present said anything. I began to feel uncomfortable—and, I confess, even ashamed—because it occurred to me that the other guests thought my listening showed active consent. I rummaged through my memories of all the methods books I've read and searched for rules of conduct to fall back on in such a case. I found none. I asked myself various questions: Should I indicate strongly that I don't share his opinions, even though he actually already knows that? Is he making such extreme statements merely to provoke me? How can I find out whether that is the case? [21]

We sat there for two hours, and from the very beginning of our meeting I and the entire restaurant had to listen to his racist and sexist tirades. I could not even go to the bathroom, because the first time I tried, Richard commented loudly and in an incredibly vulgar way on my body measurements. It was only the first course and I started to feel sick—three more courses were yet to come. I grappled with the tension between my interest in this conversation and my growing discomfort regarding the general situation and the radical nature, aggression and volume of his statements. Again and again I was relieved that this dining room had no windows onto the street through which I could have been identified by friends or colleagues. I was also confused: I was familiar with such situations, from meetings in pubs with other interviewees, but I realized that I felt utterly uncomfortable in these "posh" surroundings. I was bewildered about how to use the cutlery and felt disgusted about the waste of resources and so much food for two people (I will come back to the implications of these feelings soon). Richard—a man with little money to spend—was proud to offer me all this and drew our stay out for three more hours. My tape was full of radical racist statements such as: "Nobody needs the foreigners in Austria; they should return to their home countries, where they can bust each other's heads. I don't care." Or: "I know that women in Austria like to try a fuck with a Bimbo, but in that case they can travel to Africa—we don't need the whole of Africa to come here." [22]

Richard also made touching confessions about his loneliness and sadness—that no one actually understands him. These statements were made at a more moderate volume: "I don't need no friends. I just need a girlfriend that understands me. I am a family person." Or "If I watch a young couple in love, mostly I get depressed and angry." I realized that his descriptions of his feelings were moving me and for a short time I forgot the aggressive racist attitudes he uttered ten minutes before. I was irritated when I recognized what was

5 "Bimbo" in Austrian German is a pejorative term for people with dark skin color, identified as "Africans."

happening. Again, I tried to find a suitable behavior pattern in my anthropologically educated mind, and it told me "leave, fast." [23]

After about five hours I no longer needed an excuse to leave, as the restaurant finally closed. As we arrived at the underground exit, Richard's interest in spending more time with me became clear. He joked about his options and the guise of humor elicited from him the following statement: "If I knew that I had no chance, I would have taken another chick into this restaurant, you know. Anyway, everything has its price" (an allusion to his past as a pimp). I managed to escape the situation inelegantly, and I was glad to go home, where I immediately threw up. [24]

3.2 Thomas—and my being at odds with anti-racist racism

I was not always sure that the decision to compare racists and anti-racists was a good one. I also thought that the results might not exceed the level of scientific banality. Therefore my expectations regarding the following participative observation and interview were rather low. I already knew Thomas before I started my research on (anti-) racism and met him every once in a while in a professional context. Until the situation illustrated below, I was convinced that we were ideologically very much alike in terms of our anti-racist and anti-sexist attitudes. The progress of my research at this point disabused me of this belief. A conversation I witnessed between Thomas and a fellow employee at the NGO where he worked: Thomas, by his own description a cosmopolitan and liberal man, made the criticism that currently many Nigerians were roaming around the city operating as drug dealers: "I don't believe, that they are all forced to deal drugs. Even then, I don't care, because if they, as asylum seekers, sell the stuff to children and young people, they are not welcome in Austria." His colleague, Sonja, was irritated by his statement. She was convinced that it is not politically correct, and she tried to explain why, in her opinion, this was a racist attitude. Thomas looked at it differently, insisting that it is not racism when he openly enunciated such "facts." Despite her NGO experience and socio-scientific background, Sonja failed to deliver satisfactory factual counter-arguments and the conversation ceased. The debate ended unresolved. Sonja was left with the impression that Thomas's views are sometimes really "not appropriate," and "the senseless aims of political correctness" had been confirmed once again for Thomas. He believed that the obvious problems are disguised rather than solved because of "PCness." [25]

During their conversation I realized I was getting annoyed. I planned to try and find out why—so I noted it in my field diary. Much later during my analysis I talked to a colleague about the situation; she smiled and clarified it for me, stating:

> "You are an NGO activist yourself, working against racism; you are trained to argue in a professional way in such situations. I'm not surprised that you are upset about 'a colleague' who lacks arguments; you were 'not allowed' to help her out. You are not used to playing a passive part." [26]

In an interview a few days later, Thomas expressed his belief that migrants have genetic knowledge of how to do certain things, for example how to deal with women. He stated himself as proof of this: he must have learned his parents' mother tongue (Croatian) that way, because he understands the language but he never formally learned to speak it. According to him, those already in Austria who came many years ago have learned how "we" Austrians live democracy. But now so many are immigrating to Austria that their worldview remains intact. He was convinced that it is permissible for him to talk in such a way, because he himself was a child of guest workers and therefore is "allowed" to "tell the truth." This "truth" notwithstanding, he was convinced he is an anti-racist. He argued that there are closed cultures and he believes that when they mix there are positive results, but also problems now and in the past. Through his personal biography and approach he thought, he has the right to make certain statements. It was striking how he managed to create exceptions (arbitrary and individualized) and thus to legitimize his temporary deviation from the path of anti-racist "PC-talk." [27]

Until the next time I met him, I extensively pondered his comments on genetic learning. At this point I was still convinced that he actually meant people are being socialized rather than him believing in a genetic predisposition to particular social behavior. But during our next meeting, he told me again that in fact he believes that people's learning of behavior has a genetic basis and that even things such as patriarchy or language are learned this way. He further tried to convince me by using the example of forced marriage: his hypothesis accounted for why it is so difficult for girls to offer resistance. I was really surprised about this attitude and even more about my bias. [28]

3.3 Mary—and my feminist empathy wrangling with racist sexism

I was sitting in a small town in Western Austria drinking beer in a bar, when I met Mary for the first time.[6] I came here to check out whether this bar was a suitable place for participant observation and informal conversations. This bar was different from the other pubs in town: there was a wide range of ages among the clientele. The waitress was immediately conspicuous. She dominated the whole situation and I felt like I was watching a staged performance, because her interaction with the guests and the resulting conversations were entertaining to observe. It was getting late and only a few regulars and myself remained. The waitress, Mary, came to me to collect the bill and asked if it was OK if she joined me for a drink, now that she could call it a day. I said yes, and sat there for another three hours with her and a few of her friends. Mary was briefly curious and wanted to know where I come from and what I was doing here. Pretty soon, however, the talk was dominated by her extravagant tales of "heroic deeds against migrants." [29]

6 This third network allowed a broader perspective and a critical comparison, as this expansion also permitted a glimpse of a network of relationships outside of Vienna. However, the contrast to urban society was shown by fundamental differences concerning the construction of "the stranger," but the same strategies existed to perpetuate racism within speech communities.

For instance, she complained about getting harassed when she walks through the park in a short skirt. Even though she was far from being a feminist, her argument was close to my own feminist positioning. According to that, she was not responsible for the escalation of such a situation, but the offender (in this case a person with a migrant background) was. She should be "allowed" to dress how she wants without being sexually discriminated against in her own society. The argument "It's her own fault because of her choice of clothing" is part of patriarchal sexist argumentation that in other cases holds women themselves responsible for rape because of their female stimuli or dress decisions. [30]

Mary's arguments were radical: she is for forced repatriation in cases "like that," because "those people" are a threat to "our" women's rights for which "we" struggled hard. "If they [the Turks] murder every woman with a short skirt in their own country—I don't care, but in Austria, they have to adapt to our rules." This revealed the non-feminist, cultural racist and fundamentalist character of her argument. [31]

Of course, I do not share her cultural fundamentalism and racist attitudes, but I do recognize her principal claim concerning sexist behavior. I would not make a distinction between migrants and Austrians, but she set them apart with the following argument: "If a Turk whistles at you, it is an offence. If an Austrian guy whistles at you, it is a compliment." She tried to justify her claims in different ways: First "the Turks just use Austrian girls for sexual experiences—but it is the Turkish girls that they want to marry, because they are still virgins on their wedding day." Mary considered herself too good to be "a guinea pig like that." Second, for her "Turks are primitive, lacking education and manners"—by that she meant they have not attained the same level of civilization as "us." In that context she was referring to class differences. Third, "even me being a lesbian would be more acceptable to my parents than me dating a Turk." With this statement she pointed out that ethnic differences count (for her parents) more than (her own) heterosexual gender norms. [32]

Migrants hardly ever find their way into the bar. On the rare occasions when this happens, even then Mary complains, because they never drink alcohol: "They only order coffee, then drink it quickly and leave." Mary complains a lot about migrants—especially concerning discrimination against her as an Austrian woman by young male migrants. She also complains about the alleged brutality "of the Turks" in her hometown and she states that you only ever "see them in packs" and that they frighten the locals with their behavior, even the police: "They are much more brutal [than the locals] and have weapons with them." She narrated an incident that she sees as an illustration of the escalation of this trend. Three years ago she had broken the nose of a guy during a violent confrontation. She noted with pride that she had been the one who initiated the violence, as her opponents had merely been verbally provocative. However, everyone in the bar at the time responded with shock and took this as confirmation of their existing assumption that the Turks have a propensity towards (physical) violence, in comparison with locals. Even the young men in the bar indicated that they wouldn't get into a fight with "them." Mary seemed to have everyone's sympathy.

As for me, I only identify with her resentment against the abuses by men against women. [33]

What sets us apart is her perception that when a foreigner whistles at her it is an insult—based on her understanding of this as them "wanting to let off steam" or just take advantage of Austrian women until they marry a virgin of their own culture. However, when an Austrian whistles it is a compliment and a genuine attempt at initiating a relationship. Meanwhile, about five more people joined the discussion. Again and again I felt I should explain my position. I had already explained that I work on racism and it should have been obvious that in this context I represent feminist attitudes. This situation seems to reflect the tensions between multiculturalism and feminism in theory (OKIN, 1999; SHACHAR, 2000), which are sometimes contradictory and difficult to bear. I decided to "stay neutral," but to keep the discussion going and just show interest. Nobody thought the discussion had to do with racism anyhow—even I could not tell at the end of that evening. All I could do after these intense hours was to write notes in my journal and hope that with distance to the statements and a reasonable analysis of the material I will know more.[7] [34]

4. Conclusion

> "Anthropologists who work 'at home' are in this way seldom just insiders and outsiders to the people they work with. In my writing I have tried the best I can to situate the knowledge I produce by making my own positioning explicit" (GULLESTAD, 2008, p.6)

In terms of self-reflexive research (ALSOP, 2002; McLEAN, 2011), I am (as an Austrian researcher, a woman and an established Austrian citizen) to be considered as part of the field because of being caught up with my research subjects in a reciprocal relationship. The research subjects identified me at times as "one of them" and not as an outsider. Moreover, sometimes my presence was used by my interviewees as an opportunity to ask (the expert) questions about "racism" or "migrants." I was equally likely to be perceived as a crazy student/scholar, friend, political activist and advocate. [35]

My own social and political positioning was acutely relevant in the context of the networks I interviewed, because my anti-racist stance made it difficult for me to adopt a neutral position when it came to observations of and interviews with racist or anti-racist people. At the same time, however, there remained a specific distance, given their understanding that I would write about them or that my ideological positions differed significantly from some of their own: something that has the potential to be an issue in all anthropological field settings, whether "at home" or "abroad." I had to recognize these facts in the situation with Thomas described above. He was not the only anti-racist who made dubious statements.

7 EMERSON, FRETZ and SHAW (1995, p.27) recommend especially taking notes in the process of ethnographic fieldwork when things run counter to our expectations. While experiencing feelings of isolation and alienation we tend to rely on interpreting and explaining according to the primary structures of our early development, so in moments like that we need an auto-ethnographic effort.

Each time this happened, I was beset by doubts regarding whether I should just accept what was said or check again about what was "really" meant. I also questioned whether I would do the same with groups identified as racist. In my field notes when people who were in fact racist in group situations suddenly took anti-racist positions in one-on-one interviews, I more than once wondered why. Then I thought: Do they make these arguments because of me? Is the group pressure so high that they change positions? Those challenges during the research process ultimately played a significant role in interpreting my results and led me to my analysis of racism and anti-racism as a group phenomenon—one central finding of my study (MARKOM, 2011). [36]

The in most racist definitions inherent imbalance of power is not to simplify in terms of a dichotomous perpetrator-victim relationship. Based on feminist anthropology, I used a concept of identity in my work that recognizes multiple and contradictory subject positions (STRASSER, 2009). Multiple subject positions are based on the relative number of axes of the identity of subjects such as gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual identity, social class and age. Contradictory subject positions are those in which people in a society can occupy minority and hegemonic positions at the same time (p.44). [37]

Just as I did, the individuals I interviewed and observed developed their identities by means of multiple and contradictory subject positions (STRASSER, 2009, pp.45-46). In the interviews, I repeatedly identified that the individuals simultaneously occupied hegemonic and minority positions dependent on the speech community and in different situations, according to the topic discussed, and different categories, such as ethnic, social and geographical origin, religion, social position and gender relations were activated. However, multiple positioning does not take account of the complexity of the situation, because re/acting in different speech communities contributes to a sophisticated communication and interaction between me as a researcher and the interlocutors. The analysis of speech communities (MORGAN, 2004) allows a glimpse into a society that could be described with ERIKSEN's (2007) term "complexity." According to ERIKSEN, people have "many statuses" and belong to "different groups" simultaneously. For example: these different groups seem to be alike, but differ ideologically and likewise provide opportunities for identification. [38]

As mentioned, the interview with Richard was one of the first during my PhD research. It made me realize some of the key difficulties of anthropology at home in general and more specifically it showed a problem in my research: of being seen and identified with a racist in my hometown and therefore associated with racist ideologies. Even the remote possibility that someone I know might recognize me with Richard in this restaurant made me feel uncomfortable. Without doubt this form of personal discomfort is less pronounced in research contexts abroad, where I have found it easier to maintain a distanced scientific position, which of course helps a great deal in such difficult and embarrassing situations. Anthropology at home certainly implies a high degree of involvement of the "non-scientific aspects" of one's life. The everyday experiences of my life became intertwined with my scientific persona in this anthropology-at-home

setting. This became increasingly clear to me, when I experienced some further implications of this study. [39]

As I partly share Richard's speech community, other members of this network have more than once confronted me with such issues as to why he likes me so much, and why we get along so well. In the eyes of others within this specific speech community, my not criticizing his racist ideas seemed untypical of me. This illustrates one of the many ways in which the research affected my personal life, to an extent I had neither anticipated nor wanted. It is therefore hugely important to admit that working with racists in one's own society is emotionally burdening. For a long time I thought I was tough enough to cope with all those compromising situations, but after a year of research I recognized that it would be helpful to attend professional coaching from time to time, in order not to bring old feelings into new situations. [40]

Being a scientist at home looking at the society to which you belong means having to cope with the results, whether or not they are comfortable on a very personal level. This became obvious during my interview with Richard: I felt ashamed not only of his racist comments, but also the fact that nobody in the restaurant found it necessary to oppose his statements. This and other similar occurrences made me recognize that a lack of civil courage is characteristic of the society I live in, which initially I found very frustrating. The ignorance of the other people in the restaurant not only made me feel angry, but I also felt a kind of solidarity with Richard, who in this brief moment seemed more likeable than all the "silent followers." This empathy was amplified by the fact that I personally have a sense of belonging to and therefore more sympathy with the social class one would ascribe to Richard than that of the high-society members indulging themselves in this gourmet restaurant. This sense of affiliation (or lack thereof) due to social class is unquestionably more intense "at home" than anywhere else. This is because the attribution of a certain social class to a person is likely to be more nuanced and distinct in your own society (and also includes yourself). Although personal proximity with my interviewees was not without scientific purpose and intent, it did imply several problems for a professional and reflective approach. In the case of Richard, I was torn between pity for his loneliness and disgust for his racist attitude, and between scientific interest and being discriminated against as a woman. [41]

I already knew many of the potential and, for my topic, relevant or "promising" speech communities—and had participated in some of them myself. Hence it was easy to gain access and find a level at which exchange was possible. I was familiar with the places and contexts, and that is why I experienced a low level of insecurity in the field, because I knew what to expect. Moreover, selection and analysis of interviewees and their statements were not independent of my own value system, my educational background and my assumptions. In addition, some respondents were from immediate social proximity to various areas of my own life (e.g. my leisure pursuits, where I lived at that time, as well as my scientific activity). The more I realized the extent of my personal involvement, the more I tried to pay attention to how I acted in this multiple position in order to

avoid distorting or even anticipating the results. To ensure this, I tried not to put my own ideological position to the fore, but rather to move my own moral and socio-political concerns into the background. [42]

This was not that easy especially when things happened against my expectations as within the anti-racist network. That was the first time during my research that I was confronted with biologistic racism. It certainly was not the last time that I was presented with the methodological problem of not being able to believe that someone was really serious about an own statements. Hence, I repeatedly gave Thomas the chance to reformulate them. When Richard made racist assertions, I never hesitated to believe him. That is one of the problems when studying racists "at home" in particular and with anthropology at home in general. We bring with us our socio-culturally learned, often uncontested and sometimes habitualized stereotypes. Usually it is much easier to identify, question and deconstruct them in a "classical" anthropology-abroad situation, where the researcher is an outsider and at least in some respects "unbiased." It is difficult to distance oneself from one's own socialization—whether this means refuting or supporting racism. If anti-racists made racist statements, I tended to relativize; if racists made anti-racist statements, as in the individual interviews, I sometimes did not believe them.

> "To get it right we have to shift our attention from the collapsed relationship between knowledge and evidence to the processes by which we know, that is how we make connections in a fragmented world, and how these are imbued with particular styles of reasoning" (HASTRUP, 2004, p.460). [43]

But even if the seemingly logical combination of knowledge, evidence and facts is not sustainable, because it does not consider the power of interpretation of the researcher, it makes sense to use as many different methods as possible: observations, and group and individual interviews with the same people. After that I recommend trying to gain emotional and temporal distance (BEER, 2008, p.25). from the material and the relationships in the field before beginning analysis. During the analysis it proves helpful to work with colleagues or to consult them for feedback in terms of “communicative validity” (FLICK, 2009, p.501). In any case, it is necessary to make note of your assumptions before research begins and to analyze them as well. [44]

So what are the benefits of "anthropology at home with (potential) offenders"? Parsing my interviews with critical discourse analysis, I recognized that many racist attitudes are not verbalized in direct forms, but formulated in a subtle way. Without the meta-communicative knowledge of the different dialects in Austria and the implicit meanings of certain terms I would have had several blind spots when analyzing the data correctly. Therefore my own positioning, being located in different Austrian regions throughout my personal biography, helped me to understand important nuances in different modes of expression. [45]

This knowledge also helped in the field, especially in the beginning, to establish initial contacts. In Austria, speaking standard German often has negative connotations, even in the anti-racist, more scientifically orientated speech

community. Speaking a dialect in many cases levels the social hierarchy that emerges when a scientist questions an interlocutor. [46]

Finally, talking and arguing with racists about racism means collecting a great deal of data, because of their usually very high degree of willingness to talk about it. Some of them even think that they are in opposition to the rest of the society and thus feel they have to offer resistance in their racist ideologies. Unfortunately I could not always determine definitively if interviewees had difficulty in knowing that I was an "expert" in the field of racism. Perhaps the anti-racists felt ill at ease with my position or it provoked those in the racist networks. [47]

Something I did not anticipate was the extent to which I expected racists to be men rather than women. This has to do with my own socialization and imagination, which caused me to approach racist perpetrators from the perspective of sexism and my position as an academic and feminist. In addition, in the history of Austria there also appear to have been many more men guilty in this respect. The logic to be from many perspectives and in numerous ways racist, of course, opened up at the beginning of the research. Theories on intersectionality (CRENSHAW, 1994; DEGELE & WINKER, 2007; KLINGER & KNAPP, 2005; VERLOO, 2006; YUVAL-DAVIS, 2006) and other approaches that contribute to an understanding of complex society (ERIKSEN, 2007; HANNERZ, 1992) account for this diversity, but as a person in the field, I still had to look again actively and consciously at it. [48]

In this article I have shown that in terms of methodology "anthropology at home" requires a high degree of structural self- and field reflexivity. The positioning of one's self and others, especially in field research situations is no less scrutinized than in research "abroad." I have pointed out the challenges, specificities, difficulties of and the necessary skills for conducting research "at home," especially if the research subjects are not minoritized groups who experience discrimination,[8] but dominant majority groups of perpetrators of discrimination in specific contexts. [49]

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8 Most of the research described as "anthropology at home" concerns minoritized groups, such as migrants, travellers or indigenous people.

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