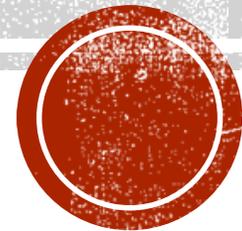


# MEMORY FOR SOCIO- POLITICAL RESEARCH

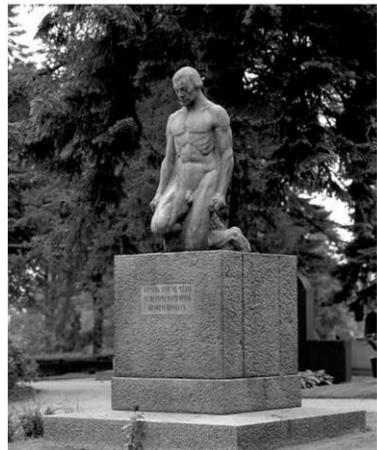
Associate Professor Zsuzsa Millei

Faculty of Education and Culture, Tampere University



# MEMORY

## Collective memory



## Collective memory work

As the afternoon wears on, she becomes aware of the need to go to the toilet, but she cannot find a way that she is happy with to ask for this. She knows she must put up her hand and ask, 'Please, Sister, can I leave the room?' but it seems disgusting to draw attention to herself in this way, as having this unmentionable bodily need. She wants to be a good girl, doing her schoolwork. She hopes if she ignores it, it will go away but eventually she feels the hot liquid release through her pants, soaking through the serge and then dripping from the wooden seat onto the stone floor. A puddle forms underneath her. She eyes it with some curiosity but admits no sense of responsibility. A change in the classroom activity allows her to move to another place but she can't escape so easily. The teacher notices the puddle. The child there now is indignant and dry and the teacher discovers her wet dress. The teacher is sympathetic, kind and smiling, but the girl still tries to ignore the wet heaviness of her pants and dress, feeling as though it didn't really happen to her ...

Bronwyn Davies , Suzy Dormer , Sue Gannon , Cath Laws , Sharn Rocco, Hillevi Lenz Taguchi & Helen McCann (2001) *Becoming Schoolgirls: The ambivalent project of subjectification*, *Gender and Education*, 13:2, 167-182,



# MEMORY RESEARCH

- Memory studies and Lifewriting are burgeoning fields of research!
- Memory Studies Association - 2020  
1500 participants
- Lifewriting conference – Madrid and Turku (2020)  
1000 participants



2019 CONFERENCE

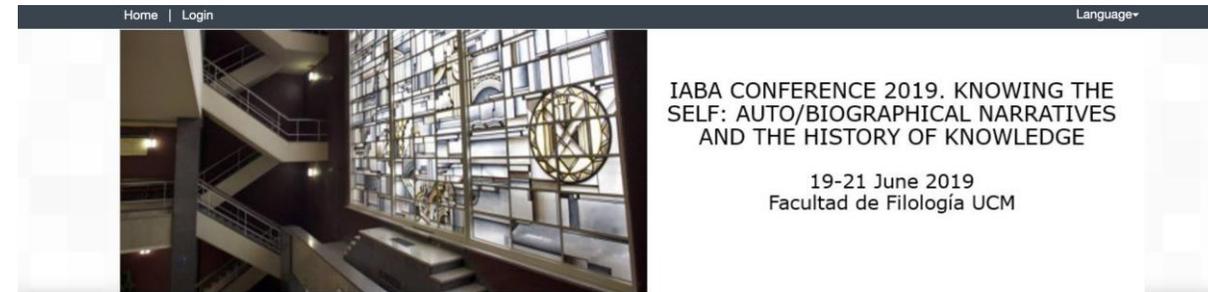
MEMORY STUDIES ASSOCIATION

MSA MADRID 2019

Watch the keynotes of the MSA Conference, Madrid 2019

1. KEYNOTE BY ALEIDA ASSMANN

2. KEYNOTE ROUNDTABLE "CONNECTING MEMORY TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD"



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# MEMORY: TIME AND POTENTIAL

- Commemorative fever of the 1980s and 1990s - historical events trigger new projects of collective and individual memory studies, films, remembrance and heritage movements, biographies and autobiographies (Miztal, 2003)
- Fuelled also sociological interest
- Memory is “a vast potential resource for the social sciences in the exploration of relations between public and private life, agency and power, and the past, present and future.” (Keightley & Pickering, 2013, p. 55)
- “Not simply concerned with the past, memory studies is concerned with the ways memories respond to the demands of current experiences and future desires, and social and cultural framework of power and knowledge through which they are filtered” (p. 67).

Research Methods  
for Memory Studies

Edited by Emily Keightley  
and Michael Pickering

Theorizing Society

Theories of Social  
Remembering

Barbara A. Miztal

# MEMORY

## Collective memory / Civil War 1918

- Body of knowledge
- Process of communication "among memory makers, memory users, and the visual and discursive objects and traditions of representation" (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 197), including landmarks, figures, place/s, time/s
- Partial, contested – its inherent part is forgetting (to erase conflict etc.)
- (SZPUNAR, 2012)

## Collective memory work

- Experience of an event
- remembering focuses on retelling an embodied moment of experiencing in time as it was felt with the materialities and sensibilities



# MEMORY (HOW IT REALLY HAPPENED?)

## Collective memory / Civil War 1918

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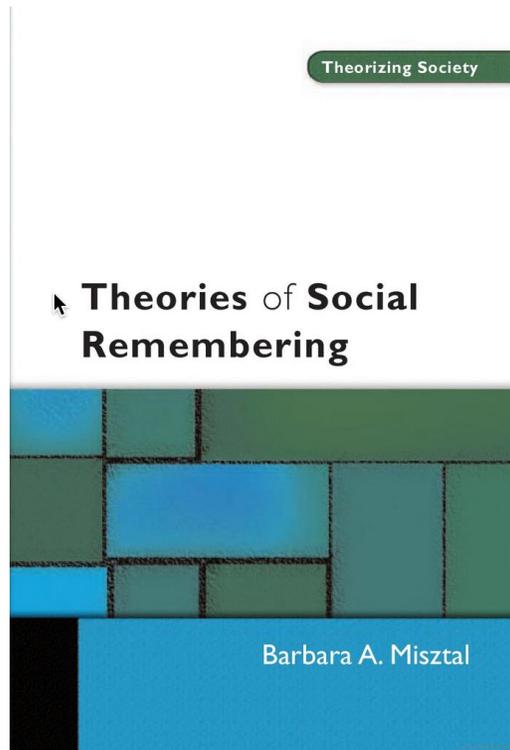
Research focus: "on the process of creating an image, the ways memory becomes a tool for the dominant class" (Haug, 2009, p. 538)

- How we actively conform with existing power relationships
- Where in the past there are 'sparks of hope' in which we recognise ourselves 'as the ones who are meant'.



# MEMORY

- Memory is in every act of perception, thinking and language
- Condition for our cognition and reflexion
- Evokes emotions and important element in one's identity construction
- Memory is viewed as a social and cultural process



# MEMORY

Theorizing Society

↳ Theories of Social Remembering

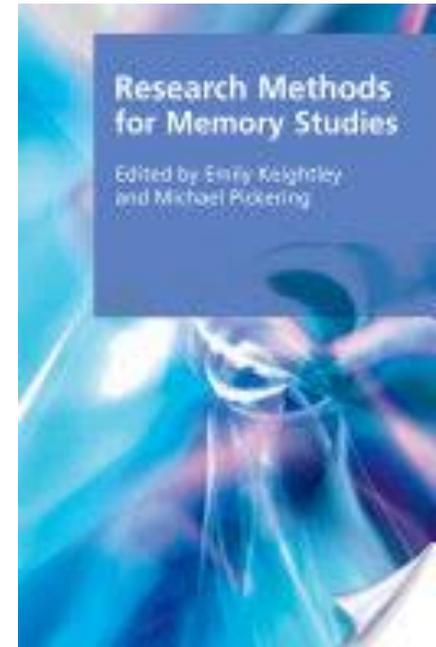
Barbara A. Misztal

- *Remembrance of things past* (Proust, 1922) – 19th century novels
- Durkheim (1925) – role of commemorative symbols and rituals in traditional societies
- Linked to Halbwachs (1926) conceptualisation of collective memory as shared social frameworks of individual recollections – really a collective phenomenon as it has coherence and complexity
- Current questions – how societies remember
- Historical research – question of witnessing – crossing with oral history and biographical research



# MEMORY STUDIES – AS METHOD & OBJECT OF RESEARCH

- “attention to memory as **both a method and object of research** means that using remembering to generate data” (p. 66)
- “must always be a reflexive process in which the researcher’s own role in co-producing remembered narratives and reflections on remembering are identified and interrogated” (pp. 67-68).
- “[i]t is ... in the process of selection, omission and synthesis that we find the value of memory for **social scientific concerns** with unpicking the complex ways in which the social and cultural frameworks that shape not only our most mundane and seemingly idiosyncratic remembering activities, but also the confusions, silences and absences in memory” (pp. 57-58).



# MEMORY - CONSIDERATIONS

- Importance of contexts – memory is intersubjectively constituted - they are shared with others and socially defined by their contexts of occurrence and use
- Emotions of remembering – not disembodied process, without any relationship with the actual contents of the thoughts and feelings of daily life
- Subsequent selves in memories during their repeated telling
- What is private to one's self and what can be shared with others
- To overcome many of these issues: Taking experience as a category of analysis (Keightley and Pickering, 2012)
- What is experience?

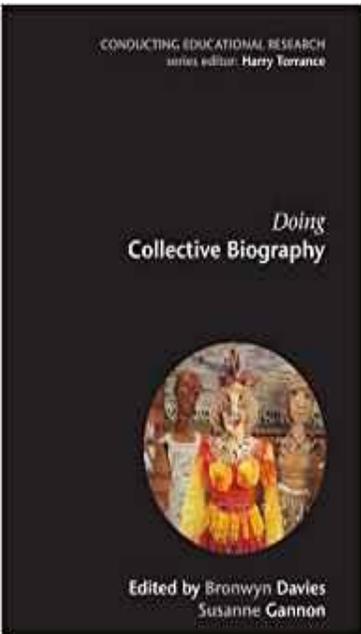


# LIVED EXPERIENCE — AS A PROCESS / DATA

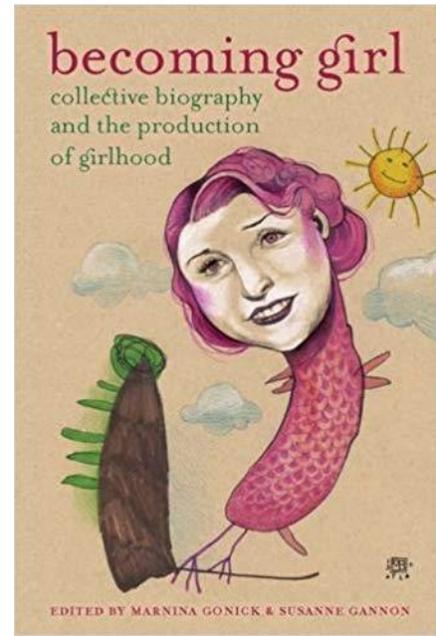
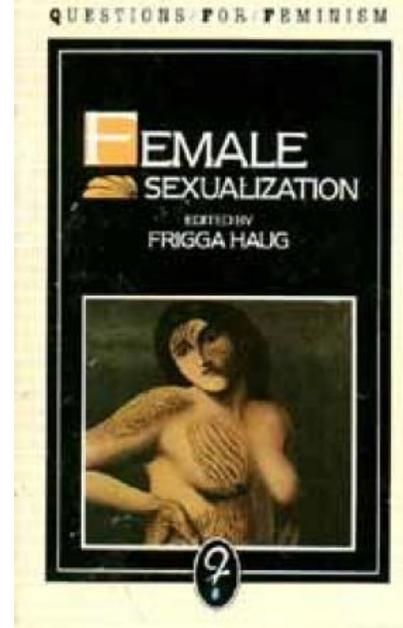
- Lived experience refers to a subject's immersion in the flow of action and interaction with others, and to our immediate observation of and feelings about the various encounters and situations we find ourselves in, from hour to hour, day to day, week to week.
- Lived experience as remembered focuses on retelling an embodied moment of experiencing in time as it was felt with the materialities and sensibilities — focus on everyday



# METHODOLOGY FOR PAST LIVED EXPERIENCE MEMORY WORK / COLLECTIVE BIOGRAPHY

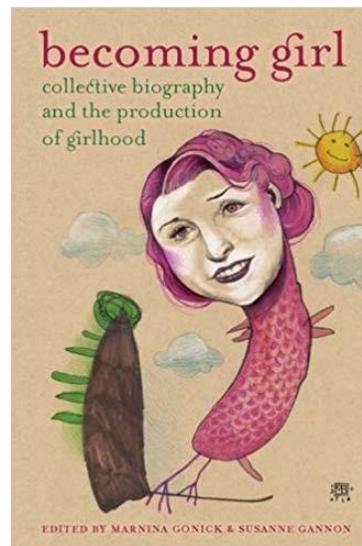
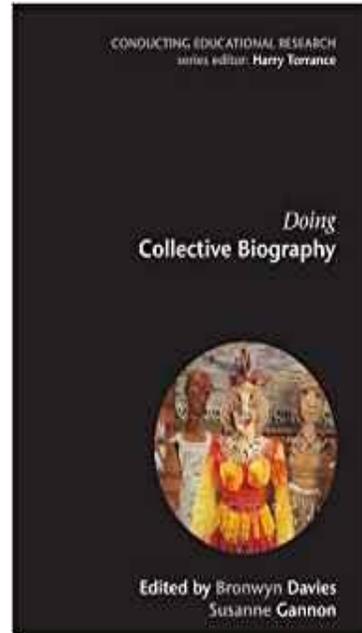


- Getting access to lived experience – create memory stories
- Frigga Haug and her colleagues in their seminal text on memory work *Female Sexualization* (1987)
- Collective biography (poststructuralist Davies & Gannon, 2006; Gonick & Gannon, 2014)
- Gap bridged between memory work and interpretative analytical work (researcher/ed is one) - richness of embodied experience



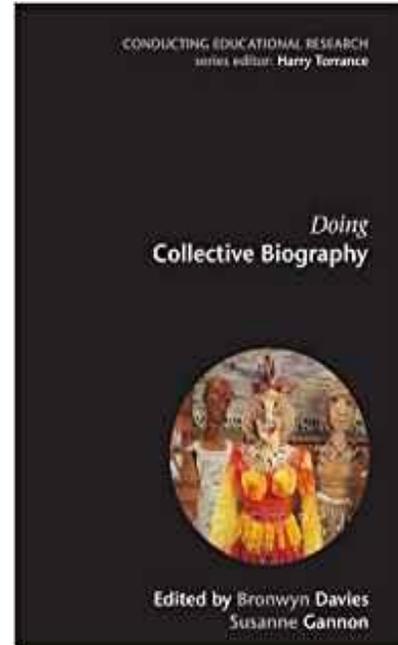
# COLLECTIVE BIOGRAPHY

- Memory work is focused on retelling lived experience and telling those as 'memory stories'
- “human beings produce their lives collectively. It is within the domain of collective production that individual experience becomes possible. ... What we perceive as ‘personal’ ways of adapting to the social are also generalizable modes of appropriation” (Haug et al. 1987, 44).
- By using post-structural form of collective biography we call attention to how “individuals are made social, how we are discursively, affectively, materially constituted in particular moments” and “how things come to matter in the ways they do” (Gonick & Gannon, 2014 , p. 6).



# IN SUM: LEARNING ABOUT THE SOCIAL

- In collective memory work, researchers “spin the web of themselves and find themselves in the act of that spinning, in the process of making sense out of the cultural threads through which lives are made” (Davies, 1994, p. 83) and I add, and we make our lives.
- What can be known is shaped by the researcher and whatever the memory story ('data') might be (Davies and Gannon, 2006)
- What can be known emerges in the in-between spaces of memory stories when something surprising can come to the surface and disrupt our thinking-as-usual (Sommerville, 2007)



# MEMORIES OF COLD WAR CHILDHOODS

- Childhood often appeared as ideologically rigid, uniform, politically controlled, and therefore entirely homogeneous.
  - “Soviet children, in the process of growing up, are confronted with fewer divergent views both within and outside the family, and in consequence, conform more completely to a more **homogeneous set of standards**” (Bronfenbrenner, 1970, p. 81)
  - “[Soviet] classrooms generally **are old-fashioned and severe** ... correct posture and discipline are strictly enforced ... [and] the emphasis is on drill, industry, and basic learning” (Bereday, Brickman, & Read, 1960, pp. 142–143).
  - “The gamut ranged all the way from highly formalized, **rigidly structure-conscious, and heavily efficiency-oriented**—with the children becoming props invented to show how efficiently things can be done—to unusually casual, proudly flexible, and relationship-focused styles of child care, with the emphasis noticeably on the production of “warm place for kids to spend the day in”. *We never were able to find out just what accounts for the existence of this amazing discrepancy ....* (Redl, 1964, p. xiv, emphasis added)
- Our memories did not resonate – initiation of our project – focus on our lived experience and a ‘child perspective’ [www.coldwarchildhoods.org](http://www.coldwarchildhoods.org)

(RE)CONNECT  
Cold War  
O  
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L  
Experiences of  
Childhood  
T



<https://coldwarchildhoods.org/>



## De-colonial and De-Cold War Dialogues on Childhood and Schooling

Through autobiographic, autoethnographic, and collective biography studies of our' own childhoods and schooling in (post)socialist spaces, this project aims to write alternative histories to inform current

---

@MEMORIESOFSOCIALISTCHILDHOOD



Frigga Haug

<http://www.friggahaug.inkrit.de/documents/memorywork-researchguidei7.pdf>

## Memory-work as a Method of Social Science Research:

### A Detailed Rendering of Memory-Work Method

Even though different terms and different points of view are used, most of us deal with power, dominance, hegemony, inequality and the discursive practices of staging, secrecy, legitimization and reproduction. And many of us are interested in the subtle tools, used by the text on the one hand to lead the mind and obtain agreement, on the other hand to incite resistance and impeachment. (van Dijk, 1995)

When I began putting memory-work to use in my work, I had to prepare for questions about the exact steps, starting points and process, methodological comparison and justification, clarity and potential for generalization, and theoretical



# SOME SOURCES (ABOVE THE BOOKS SHOWN)

Website: <https://colwarchildhoods.org/>

- Onyx, J. & Small, J. (2001). Memory-Work: The Method. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(6), 773-786, and Davies, B. & Gannon, S. (2006). *Doing collective biography*. UK: Open University Press.
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- Silova, I., Piattoeva, N. & Millei, Z. *Childhood and Schooling in (Post) Socialist Societies: Memories of Everyday Life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
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- Journals of associations shown

