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The Backpack of a Carinthian Slovene – Transmission of Transgenerational Trauma in Slovenes in Carinthia/Koroška

During the time of National Socialism, the Slovenes in Carinthia/Koroška were persecuted. The present study examines the transmission of transgenerational trauma in Carinthian Slovenes. Qualitative problem-centred interviews were conducted with second generation Carinthian Slovenes and analysed with psychoanalytic text interpretation. Even though there were no indications of trauma disorders in the present sample, there was clear evidence of mental burden linked to many of the respondents' family histories. The familial past was often experienced as a burden. The experiences of the first generation seemed to have a significant impact on the second generation. The study holds important implications for the psychotherapeutic treatment of the offspring of Holocaust survivors and highlights the societal responsibility to acknowledge the trauma of oppression and persecution.

Keywords: trauma, transmission of transgenerational trauma, Carinthian Slovenes, qualitative methodology, psychoanalytic text interpretation, photo elicitation method.

Breme koroškega Slovence – medgeneracijski prenos travme pri Slovencih na Koroškem

Slovinci na Koroškem so bili v času nacionalsocializma izpostavljeni preganjanju. Na podlagi kvalitativnih, problemsko usmerjenih intervjujev s koroškimi Slovenci druge generacije, analiziranih s pomočjo psihoanalitične interpretacije besedila, članek proučuje medgeneracijski prenos travme pri koroških Slovencih. Čeprav vzorec ne izkazuje znakov travmatske motnje, je pri številnih anketirancih zaznati duševno breme, povezano z družinsko preteklostjo. Očitno je torej, da so izkušnje prve generacije močno zaznamovale drugo generacijo. Študija ponuja podlago za psihoterapevtsko obravnavo potomcev preživelih holokavsta in opozarja na družbeno odgovornost priznavanja travme zatiranja in pregona.

Ključne besede: travma, medgeneracijski prenos travme, koroški Slovenci, kvalitativna metodologija, psihoanalitična interpretacija besedila, fotoelicitacija.

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1. Introduction

The transgenerational transmission of trauma has been studied extensively, especially in the offspring of Holocaust survivors. The mental impact of the Nazi terror and persecution for the Holocaust victims was crucial for the development of theories and concepts of psychological trauma. The influence of parental trauma on the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors led to hypotheses about possible ways and mechanisms for the transmission of transgenerational trauma. While much research has been conducted about the larger victim groups of the Holocaust, such as Jewish people, there is not much literature about Carinthian Slovenes, who represent a minority with a Slovene background in the Austrian state of Carinthia/Koroška. In a study by Wutti (2013a), the transmission of trauma is studied in three generations of three Carinthian Slovene families, and there is also a newer publication by Opetnik (2021), which focuses on the psychotherapeutic treatment of Carinthian Slovenes in regards to transgenerational traumatisation. With the aim of expanding our present knowledge about trauma transmission in Carinthian Slovenes, the present study focuses on the second generation of Slovenes. Since Wutti and Opetnik are Carinthian Slovenes, and the researcher in this present study is not, this provides a new perspective on the topic from a researcher who stepped into the research field as an outsider without personal involvement. Having no prior involvement with the research topic and not being part of the societal conflict that is connected to the group of Carinthian Slovenes provides an outward perspective on the issue and can validate and support the findings of prior studies by people who are personally affected by the topic. It is not supposed to be expressed that personal involvement diminishes the value of research. In qualitative research, the variety of perspectives on a topic is valued, since the individual standpoint of the researcher is acknowledged to have an impact on the process of data production, analysis, and interpretation, which is not seen as a weakness, but as a strength. This paper begins with a brief overview of the theoretical background of the study. This is followed by an explanation of the methodology used to investigate the research questions. Following this, the interview sample of the study and the results are presented, and in the discussion chapter, the results are further explained and the advantages and limitations of the study are discussed. The study and its results are summarised in the conclusion.

2. Background

2.1 The History of the Slovenes in Carinthia/Koroška

Carinthian Slovenes are an autochthonous group in the southern state of Carinthia/Koroška in Austria, and they are the ethnic group with the longest history

of settlement in the country at over 1400 years (Vavti 2010a). During the 19th century, nationalism in Europe grew stronger, the search for ethnic identity became more important after the end of World War I (Bogataj 2008), and an anti-Slovene atmosphere emerged (Priestly 1997) and became stronger after the plebiscite of 1920, in which the population of Carinthia/Koroška decided that a large part of southern Carinthia/Koroška should belong to Austria instead of Yugoslavia (Bogataj 2008). During the time of the national socialist regime in Austria, the protection of minorities was declared irrelevant, and the Slovene language was meant to vanish from Carinthia/Koroška (Danglmaier & Koroschitz 2015). The land and homes of Carinthian Slovenes were confiscated, Slovene newspapers were forbidden (Danglmaier & Koroschitz 2015), and the persecution climaxed with the deportation of 1075 Carinthian Slovenes into forced labour and concentration camps in 1942 and 1944. The aim was to “Germanise” Carinthia/Koroška (Bogataj 2008). After the end of the national socialist regime in 1945, the anti-Slovene atmosphere did not disappear: the propaganda spread by the Nazis and the pressure to conform with societal rules resulted in lesser use of the Slovene language, while anti-Slovene stereotypes could not be eliminated overnight, and Carinthian politicians avoided openly sympathising in order not to lose support (Knight 2017). The persecution and expropriation of Carinthian Slovenes were denied, and survivors of the camps were accused of avoiding everyday life during the war (Danglmaier & Koroschitz 2015). The suffering of the Slovenes was not publicly recognized, and the rights of the minority were not fully implemented (Danglmaier & Koroschitz 2015). Carinthian Slovenes had to fight for the implementation of bilingual topographical signs (Ottomeyer 1997), which were erected in the beginning of the 1970s and were destroyed by the public within a few days (Bogataj 2008). Even in the last 20 years, the Kärntner Heimatdienst and right-wing politician Jörg Haider fought against the use of the Slovene language in Carinthia/Koroška (Klemenčič & Klemenčič 2010), and until recent years, bilingual signs were attacked, the Slavic roots of Carinthians were denied (Bogataj 2008), and the persecution of Slovenes was trivialized (Ottomeyer & Lackner 2009).

2.2 The Role of Silence Concerning the Past and Family Secrets

After the end of the Nazi regime, the Holocaust survivors and the ones who had experienced oppression often remained silent about their cruel experiences. Family secrets as “no-go zones” (Pickering 2012, 584) were being created, which Bar-On (1989) describes as a double-wall of silence. The processes of transference and countertransference in family relationships might be disrupted by silence because the listener has no access to the inner world of the one who remains silent (Orgad 2014). The silence creates a pathological connection be-

tween the survivors and their children (Grünberg 2002). Silence regarding the past can lead to holes in the familial system of meanings (Orgad 2015), which the offspring will likely fill with fantasies (Rosenthal 1999). Secrets lead to contradictions and unknown parts of the past, which can contribute to the transmission of trauma (Klüttsch & Reich 2012). Survivors hide their past experiences from their children to protect them, but the memories have an impact on their behaviour that can make the silenced experiences even more powerful than the experiences about which they do speak (Wutti 2013b). Family secrets encompass not only unspoken experiences, but also feelings that are repressed over time (Tas 1995). The hidden experiences are transmitted on a subconscious and emotional level (Simsek 2017), and the impact of parental trauma is especially present in children whose parents do not talk about their traumatic past (Braga et al. 2012). Popov (2015, 70) postulates the risk of a “crippled mentality”, a damaged psyche that is characterized by feelings of fear and threat as a consequence of silence. According to Reddemann (2015), both silence and sharing too much can have a negative impact.

2.3 The Traumatization of Carinthian Slovenes

The deportations and imprisonment in concentration camps during the Holocaust are man-made traumas and can be classified as type II traumas, since the events took place over a longer time span and in most cases were likely accompanied by several traumatic experiences (Varvin & Beenen 2006). Carinthian Slovenes experienced their deportation as traumatic (Pittler & Verdel 1992). Being deported to a Nazi camp and being imprisoned can encompass fear of death, violence, hunger, powerlessness, humiliation, torture, and the death of loved ones (Niederland 1980). The isolation of traumatic experiences was a common occurrence in Holocaust survivors (Bohleber 2011), and it can be seen as a dissociation of the traumatic experience due to mental overload (Vavti 2010b) and the ambivalence of the need to talk and the resistance that is connected with talking (Loch 2008). Keilson’s theory of sequential traumatization (Keilson 1992, cited in Wutti 2017, 23) states that not only the traumatic period as such has an influence on whether an individual will be traumatized, but that the period after the trauma can also be crucial for the development of trauma disorders. Jurić-Pahor adapted Keilson’s model of the various traumatic episodes to the Carinthian context as follows (Jurić-Pahor 2001, cited in Wutti 2013a, 24):

1. beginning: arrestment and deportation,
2. detention in the Nazi camps,
3. post-war time: difficulties of re-integration into Carinthian society.

The anti-Slovene atmosphere in post-war Carinthia could have been a retraumatizing context (Wutti 2014), and recognition of the suffering of Carinthian

Slovenes did not occur for years (Danglmaier et al. 2017). Jurić-Pahor shows that parents and grandparents transmit their traumatic experiences to their children and that, with special focus on victims of Nazi-persecution and survivors of concentration camps, silence plays a crucial role on the subconscious level and has a strong influence on communication (Jurić-Pahor 2006). She emphasizes that when confronted with an extreme traumatic experience, the affected individual has the urge to fix the memory of it and to pass it on to subsequent generations (Jurić-Pahor 2008), and she describes the tension between the unpronounceable experience and “the need of survival and continuity of existence” (Jurić-Pahor 2008, 6).

2.4 Empirical Evidence for the Transgenerational Transmission of Traumatisation in Carinthian Slovenes

According to Wutti (2015), the trauma and the mental burden of the first generation does not remain unnoticed by the second generation. The second generation is still unconsciously trying to understand the first generation (Wutti 2015). The political battle for the existence of the Slovene language and culture in Carinthia/Koroška is still present, while the third generation is finding more emotional access to the life stories of their grandparents and has fewer inhibitions in asking about the time of the NS-regime (Wutti 2013b). Vavti (2010b) noticed a burden in the life narratives of young Carinthian Slovenes of the third generation, which is interpreted as an indication for unprocessed trauma. Members of the third generation report anxiety when visiting former concentration camps, fear of what could be left in the gas chambers, or panic at the idea of being locked in and poisoned in the chamber (Vavti 2010b).

3. Methodology

To investigate the subjective experience and to identify possible strains of the second generation resulting from the burdening history of the first generation, a qualitative research design was chosen (Mayring 1999). The main question was whether there were indications of transmitted trauma and burden in the second generation. This was followed by a question about the impact for the third generation. We were also interested in the way the first generation coped with the past, whether they talked about it or remained silent, and the relevance of Slovene identity. An interview manual for the research questions and the specific context of the study was developed, and it included the implementation of the photo elicitation method. The problem-centred interview, according to Witzel, was chosen as the interview method, and it entails all forms of open, half-structured interviews (Mayring 1999). The aim of a problem-centred interview is to investigate the research questions on the background of the subjective

meanings articulated by the interviewees (Mayring 1999). To add another method of narrating family history, the photo elicitation method was selected to complete the interview method. The participants were asked to bring old family photos, and they were asked about these at the beginning of the interview. Photos can lead to more detailed answers (Shaw 2013), can help bridge social and cultural distances (Cretin et al. 2017; Haaken 2011), and they can serve as an icebreaker (Shaw 2013). Further, photos give the participant a certain amount of control over the research process (Shaw 2013). In being able to decide which photos to bring, the participants can also decide what (not) to talk about during the interview. The use of visual elements does not require their analysis (Silver 2013), and since the focus was on the participants' subjective experiences, an analysis of the photos was not conducted. Scenic understanding was chosen as the method of analysing the interview transcripts. Psychoanalytic approaches to analyse and interpret text material stem from psychosocial studies and refer to psychoanalytic models and concepts (Willig & Stainton-Rogers 2017). Psychoanalytic interpretation can inform the interpretation of mental states and subjective meaning. According to psychoanalysis, the spoken word is influenced by unconscious processes and relational dynamics (Willig & Stainton-Rogers 2017), and psychoanalytic text interpretation is supposed to look beyond the text to identify underlying meanings and to connect the results to societal structures (Mayring 1999). Psychoanalytic text interpretation follows these five steps (Mayring 1999; Wieser 1994):

1. Logic understanding: the manifest content is analysed. Subjective reports are not tested on truth but are accepted as subjectivity.
2. Psychological understanding: the affective components of the text are registered and connected to the behaviour of the interviewee during the interview.
3. Scenic understanding: the meaning of the interactions during the interview is analysed and the atmosphere of the interview is taken into account.
4. Depth-hermeneutical understanding: capturing the unconscious meanings behind the text, registering cues of defence mechanisms etc.
5. Depth-hermeneutic reconstruction: reconstruction of repressed contents and understanding why the repression initially happened.

According to Ottomeyer and Reichmayr (2007), the term scenic understanding can also be used for the whole process of analysis. Scenic understanding and depth-hermeneutics, which are a crucial part of psychoanalytic text interpretation, are strongly influenced by Alfred Lorenzer (Ottomeyer & Reichmayr 2007). According to Lorenzer (2006), scenic understanding makes it possible to access the unconscious, the non-spoken, via the spoken word and connects the conscious with the depth of the unconscious. By engaging in interaction with the patient/interviewee, the analyst/researcher can use scenic understanding to

interpret all the presented material; Lorenzer even calls the method “the royal road to the unconscious” (Lorenzer 2006, 36). It is the step wherein the first two steps are being integrated that leads to the depth-hermeneutical understanding. It integrates information of the earlier steps and allows us to detect certain patterns in the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. This then allows a deeper analysis in the step of the depth-hermeneutical understanding (Ottomeyer & Reichmayr 2007). The results of text interpretation are influenced by the researcher(s). In order to have more objective interpretations, it is advised to let several people interpret the same material (Willig & Stainton-Rogers 2017). Owing to limited time and resources, this advice could not be followed in the present study, and the last step of the analysis, the depth-hermeneutic reconstruction, was not conducted. The goal was not to conduct a psychoanalytic text interpretation, to reconstruct repressed mental content, and to identify why this happened in the first place. This would have made it necessary to have much more time and support from other researchers, and it could not have been realised in the context of this study for a master’s thesis. Since steps 1 to 4 were conducted, the analysis does not just encompass a content analysis, but is an analysis of scenic understanding that was later connected to psychoanalytic empirical results (cf. section 5).

The decision was made to interview members of the second generation because they are probably not as burdened as the first generation, they are the closest to the first generation, and they can report about the third generation (Kellermann 2001), so that transgenerational dynamics can be explored. Since people are the beginning and the purpose of research (Mayring 1999), they are the reason for the study, and they are not detached from the results; psychological research is not only supposed to benefit science and to inform common practice but should also hold benefits for the subjects. Talking about family history and connected psychological burden can create an opportunity to talk about it and help process one’s own history and burdens (Loch 2008). The interviewees in this study were happy to be able to talk about the topic and they took the interview as an opportunity to work through the burdening family heritage and to take another step towards a deeper understanding of their own history. Since the identity of the researcher matters, especially in interviews, the perspective and position of the researcher must be reported (Mayring 1999). The author is not a Carinthian Slovene and not from Austria. Having moved to Carinthia two years before the beginning of the study, she approached the topic from an outward perspective, and her knowledge stems from literature and talking to Slovenes. She is from Germany, one of her grandfathers was a soldier in World War II, he was not a confirmed Nazi, but he was still a member of the side of the perpetrator, and she has no direct connection to groups that were persecuted in the Holocaust. When she approached the interviewees, there sometimes was a certain level of mistrust at the beginning, but after explaining that she had taken

part in a seminar by Daniel Wutti and Klaus Ottomeyer, the mistrust seemed to dissipate; it appeared that especially Daniel Wutti functioned as a gatekeeper whose connection made it easier for her to enter the field and build trust during the interviews. The motivation for her research was an interest in social dynamics and their impact on individuals who are members of a persecuted group. Her outsider position can also be seen as an advantage, since she is not affected and can therefore see the matter from a different perspective that is not guided by personal experience with the matter and is therefore possibly more open and freer of bias.

4. Sample

The author sent invitations via e-mail to Slovene organisations etc. to reach possible interviewees, and she also published a notification in the Slovene newspaper *Novice*. The interviewees contacted the researcher via e-mail, and appointments for the interviews were agreed upon. Eight interviews were conducted with nine people; one interview was conducted with a married couple. The interviews took place in September and October 2018 in the interviewees’ homes, at their workplaces, or in a room at the University of Klagenfurt/Celovec, depending on the interviewees’ wishes. The sample consisted of three women and six men between the age of 47 and 82. Seven were members of the second generation, one person was a member of the first generation, and one person could not be put in one generation alone, since their father belonged to the first generation, but their mother was a member of the second generation. Also, the member of the first generation did not feel associated to one generation alone: she was affected herself as first generation, but she also felt associated to the second generation, since she was the daughter of affected parents. These examples demonstrate that the concept of distinct generations does not always apply. The interviewees’ professional backgrounds ranged from qualified jobs to academic careers. The educational level of the sample was above average with six people having studied at a university or college. Four of the nine participants were still working, the rest were retired. Eight of them had already lost one or even both parents. All participants had at least one child. In Table 1 the characteristics of the sample are displayed for a better overview.

Table 1: Sample. Overview of the biographical data according to the temporal definition

Sample	
N	9
Gender, n	
Women	3
Men	6

Age (range in years)	47–82 (36)
mean	63.89
Generation ¹	1 st generation: 1 person
	2 nd generation: 7 people
	2 nd /3 rd generation: 1 person
Number of participants with an academic degree	6
Retired	5
Parents:	
– Both dead	6
– Both alive	1
– One parent dead	2
People with children	9
1 child	– 2
2 children	– 4
3 children	– 3

Source: Own data.

5. Results

The participants did not select specific photos for the interview as they were asked, but they brought whole photo albums or showed pictures hung on their walls. One person forgot to bring photos but talked about an important caricature in the interview. In most interviews, the photos proved to be a good ice-breaker and helped in providing enriched information about the participants' family histories. The interviewees' reports showed many similarities to former research results about family secrets and transgenerational trauma transmission. Participant 9, the member of the first generation, who was imprisoned in a concentration camp for over three years as a child, described deportation and the time spent in the camp as a shock to her feeling of security and as a loss of the innocence of her childhood (cf. Storolow 2001, cited in Bachhhofen 2007). For her the events were similar to a "break in the lifeline" (cf. Niederland 1980, 229). She reported strong feelings of anxiety for her and her mother after their time in the camp. Varvin and Beenen (2006) talk about overwhelming anxiety as a consequence of traumatic situations. Participant 9 also mentions her father's alcohol abuse, which resonates with findings by Assion et al. (2011), who report a higher risk for anxieties and substance abuse for people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Participant 4 talked about his mother's avoidant behaviour, which is a typical symptom of PTSD (cf. Dilling & Freyberger 2013) and participants 4 and 6 talked about the silencing of the past in their families, which Wutti (2013b) also reported in his study of Carinthian Slovenes. The father of participant 3 experienced a dramatic change in personality after a surgical procedure: after he woke up from the anaesthesia, he became aggressive, and he

seemed to be set back into the past. This can be interpreted as a sign of dissociative defence; an important part of his memory seemed to have been cut off from his consciousness for many years and was brought back into his consciousness after the surgery. The trigger remains unclear. While she talks about her father's aggression, she cannot understand her own aggressive tendencies. This can be seen as a sign of a transmission of aggression. There were several signs of the transmission of unprocessed emotions and contents, and participant 3 talked about the unconscious transmission of secrets (cf. Simsek 2017). However, not only silence was reported: participant 7 talked about his mother's ongoing repetitions of narrations about the past – he became his mother's audience in her processing of the past (cf. Wutti 2013b). This can be seen as a sign of compulsive repetition (cf. Bohleber 2011), and it made him suffer (cf. Reddemann 2015). He said his mother had never arrived in the present, which could mean that she was overly attached to the past, which lead to a "present of the past" (Straub & Grünberg 2001, 8). While Grünberg (2002) was not able to report an adequate method for the second generation to deal with the past, participant 2 claimed his mother had found a good way to talk about it. In several interviews, there were dissonances between the content and the emotional expression, which is often seen as a sign of underlying trauma (Loch 2008). The ongoing anti-Slovene atmosphere after the end of the war was experienced as a burden, which supports the theory of sequential traumatising of the first generation (Keilson 1992, cited in Wutti 2017, 23), and several members of the second generation experienced the time of the Ortstafelsturm (see above) as a "difficult time", which shows that the Slovenes have a shared narrative of the past (cf. Dangelmaier et al. 2017). In the following, the core results for the four research questions are presented.

Participant 3 talked about the "backpack of a Carinthian Slovene (*Rucksack einer Kärntner Slowenin*) [...] that you take with you, whether you want to or not, which is given to you, which is put on your shoulders without asking 'is it too heavy or not?'" In order to explain the analytic procedure, the conducted steps are demonstrated.

1. Logic understanding: Participant 3 talked about the "backpack of a Carinthian Slovene", which is obviously a metaphor for the burden of the familial Carinthian Slovene heritage and not an actual backpack.
2. Psychological understanding: On the affective dimension one can interpret the metaphor as an expression of feeling helpless and powerless in having to face that burden. In the interview, she talked slowly, carefully choosing her words; it seemed important to her to convey the influence on the Carinthian Slovene identity on her individual experience.
3. Scenic understanding: In the interview, it appeared to the author that the participant thought about what she wanted to say, and she wanted to convey the core essence of how her family history and identity had affected her life.

Her slow and controlled way of talking could demonstrate that it was not easy or free of pain for her to talk to the author about what it meant for her having to carry her family heritage.

4. Depth-hermeneutical understanding: One could interpret the backpack as expressing the unconscious feeling of having been forced to take over an identity that is burdened and crushing, and that the unasked question of whether it is too heavy or not conceals the wish of having been asked or having been able to choose whether to take on the family burden or not.

5.1 Transmission of Trauma from the First to the Second Generation

Ruptures, breaks, avoidances, weakness, and sadness could be witnessed many times in the participants' voices during the interviews, and these were interpreted as signs of burden in the second generation. Swallowing and audible exhaling were interpreted as signs of emotional attachment to the topics. Abstract and intellectualised reports were understood as possible avoidance. Contradictions between the content and the emotional expression were interpreted as signs of repressed burden and emotion, for example laughter during the report of horrible experiences. These remarks might seem general, but at the same time it is important to capture these impressions and to highlight that in many interviews the interviewees seemed to be experiencing emotional turmoil. Further clues for the transmission of emotions were irrational and incomprehensible emotions, such as participant 3's aggression, which seemed strange to her, or participant 1's fear of people in uniforms even though they had never had a bad experience with police officers or other people in uniforms. Several times, the participants' family histories did not seem to be fully processed: some people had an immense urge to talk about and own their history, and sometimes their psychological burden could not be judged. It likely takes a long time to process a burdened family history and familial trauma; it is possible that this process is never-ending. The fact that all of the participants who clearly belonged to the second generation displayed signs of burden speaks for a continuing effect of the parental trauma and a transgenerational transmission of mental burden. The youngest person who belonged to the second and third generations did not seem to be burdened, which could be explained by their distance from the first generation. All participants talked about their own discriminatory experiences, which could have fed into the transmitted burden from the parents in the affected individuals. The first generation participant assessed her younger siblings and her children, who belong to the second generation, as strongly affected by the history of the first generation.

5.2 Transmission from the Second to the Third Generation

170

The second generation often talked about the conscious transmission of the Slovene language and culture and teaching their children an adequate way of handling family history, but they did not discuss the psychological burden that could stem from family history. One adequate way of handling the topic that they mentioned was not remaining silent about family history, but also not sharing too much and sharing age-appropriate topics for children. It seemed to be crucial that parents themselves were at peace with it when discussing it with their children. The effect of family history on the third generation was still perceived but could not always be described as their own burden. In contrast to that, some people reported a more flexible way of handling the past, a better method of processing the family past, e.g., by talking about it in psychotherapy (granddaughter of participant 9) and seeing the Slovene language as a valuable resource and gaining a more self-confident identity as a Carinthian Slovene from their children.

5.3 The Effects of the First Generation's Handling of the Past on the Second Generation

The interviewees reported that the way the first generation dealt with the past also influenced them. In some families, silence dominated, and the participants reported that the fact that they could not entirely piece together their family history was a burden and that it still occupied their minds today. When their questions were not answered or certain topics were avoided, they felt that something had remained untold, and their family history was partly still a puzzle to them. Participant 6 said that she always knew that there was something behind the silence, but she interpreted the silence as intended to protect the second generation, and participants 3 and 4 were still trying to understand their family histories at the time of the interviews. In contrast, participant 7 talked about his mother's excessive reports about the traumatic past, which overwhelmed him and made him leave Carinthia/Koroška as a young adult. In both cases, there seemed to be an imbalance and a burden that the parents were not at peace with and about which they were unable to adequately teach their children. Participant 5, the youngest person, claimed that the narrations of his grandmother were very interesting to him, but did not burden him. Participant 2 reported his mother having a forgiving attitude towards the aggressors who killed her parents and that she was at peace with her trauma, which seemed to be an adequate handling of the past for him; given that he was the only one in the second generation. The fact that he was in some way surprised that he did not feel hate towards the aggressors could be understood as a sign of the hate not being absent, but rather it was not talked about and might have been repressed. The first generation's method of dealing with the past seemed to have a detrimental impact on the

psyche of the second generation: silence still made them try to understand the past, constant talking was unbearable, and an adequate handling helped them find peace with the past.

171

5.4 The Relevance of Identity as a Carinthian Slovene

All the participants attributed great importance to their Slovene identity, and they all described themselves as conscious Carinthian Slovenes, even though participant 5 did not like the label Carinthian Slovene. The conscious transmission of Slovene culture and language and their own experiences of discrimination made them even more self-confident in their identities as Carinthian Slovenes. Several participants talked about being active in the preservation of the Slovene language and culture in Carinthia/Koroška, and some even had their professional life entangled with the topic of the Slovenes. Some of their families had been conscious Carinthian Slovenes even before the time of the NS-regime, but the history of repression and persecution by the Nazis seemed to strengthen the perceived importance of the topic for the participants, as did their own experiences of being discriminated as members of the minority. Participant 3 described the legacy of being a Carinthian Slovene as a backpack that she as a Carinthian Slovene must carry her whole life without having given consent. Carrying the backpack is a lifelong task of responsibility and dealing with the past, which is burdening on the one hand, but also positive on the other hand. The image of the backpack portrays the burden of family heritage and sums up the ambivalence of being a Carinthian Slovene. The observation that identifying as a Carinthian Slovene was very important for all the interviewees could be interpreted as a coping mechanism to handle the family history of discrimination as a family with a Slovene background or as a resource that strengthens their self-confidence as people with Slovene heritage, but this cannot be judged based on the analysis, since it was not part of the central research questions.

5.5 Mechanisms of Transmission and Transmission Dynamics

Often, the narrations of the interviewee's parents about the past were reported to be very emotionally loaded, and the children listening to these narratives likely not only remember the content of the stories, but have also internalised the emotions connected to them. Unexplainable feelings and strong feelings of responsibility could be transmitted through unconscious processes, e.g., the parent's irrational anxiety is also felt by the child and is adopted. This is a process that could be explained with the concept of projective identification: on a sub-conscious level, a person wants to free the self from their own unwanted mental aspects, e.g., emotions, which threaten to damage the self, and therefore transfers those into another person. The transferred emotions are evoked in the other per-

son who now has to deal with these feelings (Ogden 1979). This stands in line with Volkan and Ast's (2002, cited in Freyberger & Freyberger 2011) assumption that children sometimes become "containers" for their parents' emotions and they continue processing the emotional baggage in the present time. This connects to the hypothesis that grief is also transmitted to the second generation (Rosenthal 1999), which was visible in participants 4 and 6 who felt overwhelmed when discussing family history or visiting a concentration camp. In several interviews, there was evidence of identification with a parent, most of the time with the likely more traumatised parent (participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9) which is supported by Kogan's (2009, cited in Freyberger & Freyberger 2011) observation that offspring of Holocaust survivors identify with the traumatised parent. Participant 5 was not burdened by the past, from the reports by participant 6 we identified no identification, and participant 7 did not identify with his mother, but rather fled from her depression to protect himself. He listed character flaws, which could have resulted from his family history, as a possible way of burdening his own children, but could not name any specific consequences for them. Participant 8 exhibited defensive behaviour when asked about psychological burden or trauma; whether he had taken on the defence mechanisms of his father rather than the burden remains a matter of speculation. Participant 9, who herself had to live in a concentration camp for over three years, showed similar anxieties to her mother and became coequal to her parents after the war, even though she was only a child of nine.

The heritage of being a Carinthian Slovene was described by participant 3 as a burdening backpack that you inevitably adopt, which shows that the first generation did not consciously give the burden to the second generation, and the second generation did not consciously take it on. When parents are emotionally burdened, this affects their children, since they are very dependent and strongly connected to them: they might be the person their parents unconsciously dispose their unwanted and unprocessed emotions in and who then have the pressure to act according to the projected fantasy and deal with the mental load of their parents, since it has become their own (Ogden 1979). According to the telescoping of generations (Faimberg 2005, cited in Salberg 2015, 23), which describes the dynamic of identification in a family across generations and is based on the assumption that it takes three generations to process severe trauma, the question remains open as to whether it could also affect more than three generations, but this cannot be answered in the present study. The difference between the generations could result from the following dynamic: the first generation is unable to talk because of an "inability to remember, to mourn and to symbolise the trauma" (Klütsch & Reich 2012, 578), which could explain the silence of the first generation under which the second generation suffers and decides to break the silence, leading to the third generation learning differently about the history and dealing with it. Participant 3's quote: "that, what I did not under-

stand, I adopted” shows that the second generation also has an active part in the transgenerational trauma dynamic. This is also important when it comes to highlighting the possibly traumatizing impact of discrimination, which not only directly affects the first, but also affected and still affects the second generation. Its members are therefore not entirely passive victims of the transmission, while this term implies a passive role, but they are also actively adopting the heritage of their family history and the connected burden and resources. While these processes mainly happen on an unconscious level and it is not a conscious choice in children to take on the emotional burden of their parents, I still want to make it clear that the unconscious dynamics of the recipient play an active part in the transmission of trauma. Participant 3 said that she adopted what she did not understand, which was explained above. In order to highlight this, I wish to suggest the term **transgenerational adoption of trauma**.

6. Discussion

In the interviews conducted for this study, the aim was not to diagnose or not diagnose the interviewees with a trauma disorder. None of the interviewees showed indications of a manifest trauma disorder (e.g., by naming typical symptoms for such disorders), but there was evidence of psychological burden due to family history in eight of the nine participants. So even if the members of the second generation in this study did not seem to suffer from a clinically defined trauma disorder, all but one (who was the youngest) showed indications of significant psychological burden, and it became clear that the second generation was all but separated from the suffering of the first generation. That assumption was not only based on the manifest reports of the interviewees, but also on paraverbal signs and emotional impression from the interview situation as explained at the beginning of paragraph 5.1. This stands in line with the research findings cited above. In all the interviewees, an identification with their Slovene background was obvious, and all were interested in protecting the Slovene language and culture in Carinthia/Koroška. All participants reported their own experiences of individual and/or structural discrimination, which was a crucial part of their psychological reality and must be considered when reading the results. Since only ethnically identified Carinthian Slovenes who practice the Slovene language, identify strongly with their Slovene heritage, and often work to keep it alive in Carinthia took part in the study, the results are not representative for the diverse Slovene group in Carinthia. Carinthian Slovenes who do not identify strongly with their Slovene background might put less emphasis on their Slovene family heritage and the Slovene language and therefore might handle the possibly traumatic family history differently and experience discrimination less often. This could be seen as a flaw in the study, but since it would not have been realistic to expect people who do not want to identify as Slovene to take

part in an interview for this study, it could not have been avoided. The present sample was still diverse, and the insight into several different family histories and dynamics can show important aspects of transgenerational trauma dynamics in Carinthian Slovenes. Since the primary aim of qualitative studies is not to create a representative sample but to shed light on subjective and intersubjective psychological processes, the study can be seen as successful. Even though nobody fulfilled the task of selecting a few photos for the interview, the integration of photography into the interview process proved to make sense, since it was a useful icebreaker and a good way for the participants to reveal something very personal. When analysing the interviews, the researcher realized that a question about siblings and how they deal with their family history would have been useful, so maybe this could be integrated into future interviews with the second generation. The psychoanalytic text interpretation proved to be a good method of investigating the given research questions. The relatively high degree of subjectivity is often named as a disadvantage of this method, but since the research of subjectivity can only be analysed intersubjectively, it is not only inevitable, but rather a strength and not a disadvantage of qualitative methodology, which does not have the aim to remain on a superficial and objective level, but to go deeper to explore individual experiences.

7. Conclusion

In several interviews, there was clear evidence of transgenerational transmission of psychological burden caused by family history. The main mechanisms of transmission seemed to be the transfer of unprocessed emotions and grief from the first to the second generation and the identification of the child with their more traumatized parent. The first can be seen as the unconscious but active part of the first generation to use their children as containers for their own unbearable burden. The second one can be seen as the unconscious but active part of the second generation adopting the first generation's burden. The phenomenon of transgenerational trauma transmission is the subject of scientific debates and there is a discrepancy between the observation of many psychotherapists that psychological injuries are inevitably transmitted in survivor families and the doubt of scientists about the specificity of the symptoms in the second generation who even postulate that the trauma could have benefits for the family (Kellermann 2001). Since many studies investigate the topic with quantitative methods and the family dynamics seem to be too complex to break down the transgenerational effects on isolated symptoms, the author argues that quantitative approaches are likely inadequate in investigating such a complex and subjective matter. Wutti (2013a) mentions in his study with the first, second and third generations that the burden of the first traumatized generation turns more and more into a resource in the third generation. The hypothesis that there can also

be a positive dimension to trauma transmission cannot be fully denied either, since participant 3 described her heritage as ambivalent and not entirely negative, but what the positive aspects were exactly remained unclear in her report. She stated that her backpack as a Carinthian Slovene was a burden that one had to carry, whether one was willing to or not, but the backpack also symbolized the heritage of her family. This heritage is connected to the lifelong task of breaking the big rock she has to carry into small bits; in other words, to bear the burden and work on it day by day. The contradiction between the battle with the burden on the one side and the thankfulness for family heritage on the other side seemed to be a core element of her identity.

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