

# Shame, Fear, and the Feeling of Not-Belonging

## Learning About Class and Classism Through Storytelling

---

Iris Mendel and Lisa Scheer

**Abstract** *In times of increasing social inequality and child poverty, issues of class and classism play a crucial role in pedagogy and teacher training. However, class and classism seem to be very difficult topics to address. Classism is often articulated indirectly through feelings of fear and shame. It often remains invisible because it is strongly supported by the hegemonic bourgeois norms, values and – in particular educational – institutions and thus seems “normal”, almost “natural” (Kemper and Weinbach; hooks; Seeck). Drawing on results from our research project “Habitus.Macht.Bildung” (University of Graz, 2019–2021) and teaching experiences, we will present three approaches of storytelling to reflect on class and classism in the university classroom. A first approach of addressing social inequalities and hegemonic power relations is through assignments in which students apply storytelling. We show an example from a massive open online course (MOOC), in which students were asked to write scripts for explanatory videos. The students were very creative in telling stories about classism in education (institutions) and habitus reflexivity and were able to show their deep understanding of classism. Secondly, we discuss the use of songs to explore classism in educational settings. Specifically, the song “2 Liter Eistee” (“2-Liter Iced Tea”) by Voodoo Jürgens is used to initiate discussions about classism and apply some of Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts. A third way to break up the taboo of class in the university classroom is through working with auto- or socioanalytical narratives of others (most famously Eribon). We draw on a collection of portraits of “class passengers” that illustrate the intersectionality of class, gender and race (Aumair and Theißl). Storytelling, we argue, may enable becoming aware of class privilege or disadvantage, irritate common classist conceptions and move beyond deficit perspectives on poor and working-class people.*

**Keywords** *Classism; Narratives; Open Educational Resources; Higher Education*

We begin our engagement with storytelling and classism with a quote from a novel, specifically from the second book of Elena Ferrante's famous *Neapolitan Quartet* about the mixed friendship between Elena and Lila in a poor neighborhood in Naples. The second book particularly addresses education and social inequality. Elena, the narrator of the story, has moved from Naples to study in Pisa and experiences what is typically called educational "upward" mobility.

My first impression, that of finding myself part of a fearless battle, passed. The trepidation at every exam and the joy of passing it with the highest marks had faded. Gone was the pleasure of re-educating my voice, my gestures, my way of dressing and walking, as if I were competing for the prize of best disguise, the mask worn so well that it was almost a face. Suddenly I was aware of that almost. Had I made it? Almost. Had I torn myself away from Naples, the neighborhood? Almost. Did I have new friends, male and female, who came from cultured backgrounds, often more cultured than the one that Professor Galiani and her children belonged to? Almost. From one exam to the next, had I become a student who was well received by the solemn professors who questioned me? Almost. Behind the almost I seemed to see how things stood. I was afraid. I was afraid as I had been the day I arrived in Pisa. I was scared of anyone who had that culture without the almost, with casual confidence. (Ferrante 402–403)

This quote says a lot about how class and classism work: the feeling of not-belonging when experiencing class mobility, the enormous and obvious effort put into this mobility, the importance of culture as means of class distinction contained in the "almost", the casual confidence of class privilege; the role of the body as "social memory" and hence the centrality of feelings of fear (and shame). A lot of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social inequality can be found in this quote.

In this chapter we will take up these topics as well as Bourdieu's theory to introduce a pedagogical approach to deal with class and classism in education. This approach is based on the results of the empirical research project "Habitus.Macht.Bildung – Transformation durch Reflexion" ("Habitus.Power.Education – Transformation through Reflection"<sup>29</sup>) that was conducted at the University of Graz from 2019–2021.<sup>30</sup> One of the project's aims was to produce open educational resources (Froebus et al.) to address social inequality in education, in particular classism, to be used in university courses, workshops and trainings. Classism is something we, the authors of this text, experienced in our lives both from a place of privilege and a place of discrimination; the myth

of meritocracy against better knowledge keeps “haunting” us, also because we have benefitted from it. When we talk about learning and teaching about classism in the following, this also affects us as researchers and as university teachers and requires us to reflect our own involvement in dynamics of privilege and discrimination.

A main difficulty in addressing class and classism is to move beyond a “deficit perspective” which can also be found in some interpretations of Ferrante’s quote above and Bourdieu’s theory. Therefore, we will first discuss some pedagogical challenges when engaging with class and classism in the classroom and argue why storytelling is a good method. Reading and/or writing stories with students to introduce them to a topic, to familiarize them with academic concepts and theories, to support them in developing an attitude critical of inequality and to facilitate self-reflection may still be rather unusual or rare in German-speaking countries. Among the few published German examples is one using digital storytelling as teaching method and learning outcome in an international, interdisciplinary, collaborative course on climate change in which groups of students created digital stories (Otto) and one presenting the application of academic storytelling and research-based learning for teaching statistics in various courses and to heterogeneous groups of students with the aim of supporting student learning and understanding through stories (Kruppa and Kiehne). In the Anglo-American world, however, (digital) storytelling – especially with a focus on social inequalities, power relations and discrimination – has a long tradition (e.g., McDruvy and Alterio; Croom and Marsh; Hartlep et al. or the journal *Storytelling, Self, Society*). Recent publications even include higher education teachers’ research into (digital) storytelling as a learning activity and method (e.g., Jamissen et al.). In this chapter, we will show three examples of how to use different forms of storytelling to understand and challenge classism: videos, songs and auto- or socioanalytical narratives. We will also discuss how storytelling may irritate common (classist) conceptions of social mobility. Finally, we will draw some conclusions of how storytelling enhances learning about class and classism, but also point to its limitations.

## Pedagogical Challenges in Addressing Classism

What is classism? In short, classism means “discrimination based on social background” (Kemper, *Klassismus [Classism]* 6). The concept of classism was

first brought up in the context of the feminist movement in the 1970s by the lesbian group “The Furies” (Kemper and Weinbach 35), so it was always understood in an intersectional way, in particular in relation to gender and race. It was working class students and researchers who brought the critical knowledge about classism into academia. According to the theories of classism, class is not only related to material resources like wealth and property (the economic capital in Bourdieu’s theory), but also to questions of culture (Bourdieu’s cultural capital): the way one speaks, one’s taste, one’s education, among others; and class is related to one’s social networks and connections (the social capital in Bourdieu’s words). Class is also embodied in the way one walks, feels, thinks, talks, perceives the world and it sets limits to one’s thinking. Bourdieu (e.g., *Sozialer Sinn [Logic of Practice]*) calls this *habitus*, which describes the incorporation of the social position in the world or a kind of embodied “‘memory-support’ of the social” (Rieger-Ladich and Riecken 196). The *habitus* is very difficult to change as expressed in the entry quote describing Elena’s strenuous efforts of self-transformation. Thus, class has a bodily existence similar to gender and it is not natural (again similar to gender), but socially constructed. However, it is often naturalized in order to justify social inequalities as unchangeable, as is gender.

Several authors such as bell hooks (*Where We Stand*), Francis Seeck (*Zugang verwehrt [Access Denied]*) or Andreas Kemper and Heike Weinbach (*Klassismus [Classism]*) have contributed to bringing up issues of classism in the academic and public discourse and have emphasized its persistent invisibility in public discourse. Classism is strongly supported by the hegemonic bourgeois norms, values and institutions like the university or the high school, so it seems “normal”. Bourdieu<sup>31</sup> captures that with his concept of “symbolic violence”, Kemper calls it the “cultural imperialism” of classism: a “strategy that even leads the discriminated groups to consider themselves as ‘the other’ by the . . . standards of the rulers” (*Classism* 14) – just as Elena does in Ferrante’s novel. In particular the myth of meritocracy renders discrimination invisible because it suggests that inequality is a consequence of achievement and thus fair and rational. It is important to address these “hidden mechanisms of power” (Bourdieu, *Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht*) in order to move beyond pedagogical approaches that focus on compensating “deficiencies” while leaving unequal power relations intact.

Talking about class and classism implies talking about the injustices of society, therefore class and classism are unpleasant topics (Sayer qotd. in Wellgraf). Also, classism is often articulated indirectly through feelings like fear,

as described by Elena in the opening quote, and shame. Fear and shame seem central feelings associated with classism that came up a lot in our research of students' educational experiences and also in our own memories of learning (and teaching). Fear limits one's space in the world, as the psychotherapists Udo Baer and Gabriele Frick-Baer (13) point out; fear also makes it more difficult to learn, because learning is also about taking risks, asking questions, challenging the familiar; and fear makes it also more difficult to teach, which is after all a way of taking space and time of others that not everybody feels entitled to. As Bourdieu states: "One's own relationship to the social world and the place one ascribes to oneself in it is never more clearly represented than to what extent one feels entitled to occupy the space and time of the other" (Bourdieu, *Die feinen Unterschiede [Distinction]* 739). Shame and shaming, on the other hand, can be understood with Bourdieu as "hidden mechanisms of power" or acts of "symbolic violence" that put people in their social place, often even non-verbally by subtle or unconscious gestures or gazes. These "hidden mechanisms of power" establish hierarchies and exclusions by working with generally accepted categories (of the "good", "beautiful", "decent", "proper", "original" but also "dirty", "inappropriate", "tasteless", etc.) (Froebus et al., "Klassenreise" 5). While the mechanisms of power often remain invisible, they produce a particular visibility of working class or poor people as "the other". Classism may be absent in the public discourse and its denial of a class society, but exploitation and poverty are very real for working class and poor people (Seeck).

It is also difficult to address class and classism in educational settings like universities, colleges or schools because the concept of class itself has been replaced by concepts like milieu or stratum, even in social sciences and pedagogical research and literature. A main pedagogical challenge therefore is to break the taboo of class, to (re-)introduce class and classism as a theoretical concept and to find a language for something that feels almost natural. Theory creates a distance from experiences of privilege or discrimination and makes power relations visible. The language of theory therefore may enable discussions about classism (or rather that these discussions are heard). Authors talking about their own experiences of classism often stress that they do so from a more secure position of distance with regard to time or also with regard to language (e.g., Aumair, *Das Gefühl von Armut [The feeling of poverty]*). At the same time power relations and discrimination cannot be understood merely theoretical, but need an engagement based on experiences (Nadolny 16). In particular, the personal reflection of experiences of discrimination needs a space of trust and voluntariness, or a safer space, which is sometimes difficult to

establish in the university context. Teachers have to be aware that teaching about discrimination can be harmful to students if it repeats existing moral evaluations and hierarchies. Both fear and shame are not only limiting, but also protective feelings after all. It is therefore important to challenge classist evaluations and hierarchies and elaborate how they have been constructed historically. Finally, learning and teaching about discrimination should ideally also discuss opportunities for collective action. In the following sections, we present three examples from our own teaching and our research project for addressing class and classism through storytelling in the context of higher education.

### **Classism and Storytelling in Video Script Assignments**

A well-designed assignment which evaluates the students' competences development is aligned with the course content and learning objectives, and at best is also meaningful to students and teachers. Assignments that do not simply end up in the teacher's drawer or clutter their storage but are instead accessible by a broader audience and shared with an interested public generally motivate students and teachers alike. Therefore, it is no surprise that (digital) storytelling is commonly used as exercise and as assignment in higher education courses (for examples see [narrativedidactics.org](http://narrativedidactics.org) or [agingactivisms.org](http://agingactivisms.org)). In summer term 2022, Susanne Kink-Hampersberger and Lisa Scheer used storytelling among their course assignments. Their course "Education is for everyone! – Myths, social inequality and classism in (higher) education" consisted of a very mixed group of 24 students from BA Teacher Education and MA Global or Gender Studies, European Ethnomethodology, and Economics. At that time Lisa Scheer has been creating a German Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) named "Gut durch den Hochschul-Alltag: diversitätssensibel, vor(ur)teilsbewusst und inklusiv" ("Getting through everyday higher education life well: diversity-sensitive, prejudice/privilege-conscious and inclusive"), online on the MOOC platform [imoox.at](http://imoox.at) since fall 2022. The aim of the MOOC is to provide knowledge on social inequality, everyday and university examples of discrimination, marginalization and power relations, to raise awareness for prejudice and privileges, and to support solidarity and diversity-sensitive agency. In nine lessons, the MOOC addresses power relations in higher education as a place to study and work, from sexism and racism to ageism and classism. The course design encourages observation and reflection, supports

the development of knowledge and provides suggestions for acting more inclusive and as an ally in everyday higher education.

Since one of the lessons addresses classism, Susanne and Lisa gave their students the group assignment, worth 35% of the course grade, to write a video script with the goal to turn the scripts into videos for the MOOC. Thus, these videos should provide explanations of classism and other concepts that were tackled in class as well as concrete examples so that learners would be able to better understand and detect classism. In three groups, the course participants wrote video scripts of “A classism tale”, “The habitus-sensitive glasses”, and “Classism on every corner”, all of which were turned into videos by professionals at the University of Graz and the Technical University Graz and included in the MOOC.

Fig. 6: Screenshot from Ein Klassismurmärchen [A classism tale]



Fig. 7: Screenshot from Ein Klassismurmärchen [A classism tale]



Before working on their stories, students were provided with input and had to do exercises and reading assignments on classism, meritocracy, and Bourdieu's concepts. Also, Susanne and Lisa presented them an explanatory video on how such videos could look like as well as suggestions for possible topics or questions that could be covered in the video. A brainstorming kicked off the writing process which was accompanied by several rounds of feedback on their texts. It proved very helpful to let them act out their script in front of the entire course group, which was possible to do outside. First, this gave them an immediate impression of how well their story worked and whether the script was too long. Second, the loose and at the same time fun atmosphere created a very relaxed climate to give peer feedback.

Storytelling is a good way to assess students' understanding of a topic or concepts. In a short, anonymous survey sent out to the course participants in order to collect feedback on the storytelling assignment, one student wrote: "To think about how to translate theory into a medium that is easy to understand and visually appealing was a fun challenge." It is motivating to students to produce something "real", but video scripts as course assignment also hold a few challenges for the teachers: Grading a group product is tricky and the same grade for all group members could be unfair to those who contributed more or understood the theory better than others. A student on that matter: "In order to translate theory it was definitively necessary to understand it. Sometimes it was difficult, because not everyone in the group had the same level of understanding." Also, creative products such as video scripts are hard to compare to each other and evaluation criteria must be wide and at the same time precise enough to support a fair grading. Not all students are equally creative and like working on creative assignments. Therefore, Susanne and Lisa designed it as a group task and assigned it only a third of the course grade. One student agrees with that, writing: "I think there should be more innovative assignments [such as writing a video script, L.S.]. But it is important that it is not the only course assignment/assessment." Another possibility to reduce student pressure regarding creative storytelling assignments is to work with already existing stories, found in books, short stories, movies, videos, TV shows and songs.

## Discussing Classism through Songs

Pop and rap songs are very suitable to reflect on and discuss classism, because music is not only used by marginalized and discriminated people to express their experiences and criticism; it is also a common medium to spread the meritocratic ideology and praise capitalism. Therefore, one will find many good songs that reference any of the classism-related concepts explained above to carry out the following exercise that was developed and tried by Iris Mendel in her teaching in the field of teacher education for primary and secondary teachers and that can be found in the OER of our research project (Froebus et al., "2 Liter Eistee"). For the exercise, we used the song "2 Liter Eistee" ("2-Liter Iced Tea") by the Austrian singer-songwriter Voodoo Jürgens. Other Austrian songs appropriate to inspire an intersectional discussion of classism, sexism, racism, and nationalism are for instance, "Welche Regeln gelten hier" ("Which rules apply here") by EsRAP oder "Nicht von hier" ("Not from here") by YUGO.

No matter the song's language, but especially when it is sung in dialect, we advise to offer the (printed or projected) song lyrics for any reflection and discussion. In addition, unknown expressions should be translated into written German beforehand or together in the group. Both these measures can be considered anti-discriminatory as they even up different language skills. In "2-liter iced tea", the singer describes situations of classism and social inequality in school. Therefore, the song provides a low-threshold, emotional, and illustrative approach to the topic and offers the possibility to relate with personal school memories. The song is about a nameless boy, his experiences at school and how teachers, other pupils and their guardians treat him. He is described as consuming potato chips and iced tea, losing one of his slippers, stealing another pupil's sneakers and not wearing Levi's jeans like his classmates, but a different (probably cheaper) brand. The teachers are portrayed as making him stand in the corner, accusing him of making excuses and scrawling, informing him of an impending failing and demanding to speak to his parents at the parent-teacher conference. Guardians are depicted as insinuating that he has stolen a pencil and wanting their children to stop having a relationship with him because he is no proper company.

After listening to the song, in groups, learners are invited to answer questions such as: Which characters appear in the song and what messages do the different characters convey to the pupil? What feelings could be triggered in him? What is the class background of the pupil and what is your assumption based on? What is the teacher's attitude towards the child and what are their demands? Why does Voodoo Jürgens sing in dialect? What effect does this have on you? How does it relate to the content of the song? What attitude do you think the teacher should adopt towards the child? What options do you see for the teacher? How can the song be analyzed with the help of Bourdieu's concepts (symbolic violence, habitus, types of capital)? (Froebus et al., "2 Liter Eistee" 3) Depending on the time at hand, a selection of these questions may be appropriate.

The song can be used with students to discuss stereotypes and prejudices about children from the poor and working class and the 'bourgeois virtues' such as diligence, neatness, manners, among others, that often serve as an unquestioned standard of evaluation. Going through the boy's story, the different types of Bourdieu's capital become visible and can be discussed, along with the link between capital and classism. In addition, the negative moral evaluation of members of the poor and working class can be addressed. In our research project, many student teachers recalled these classist evaluations, for example

by asking why the parents did not provide the boy a “decent” snack or do not take better care of him. The song line “Olle maunans guad mit dir” (“All mean well with you”) invites a discussion of symbolic violence and how people often judge or act in a classist way “in the name of the good” (Froebus et al., “2 Liter Eistee” 4). In addition to being a discussion stimulus on classist stereotypes and prejudices as well as on Bourdieu’s different types of capital, the lyrics of “2 Liter Eistee” offer a possibility for self-reflection in this regard. Besides reflecting on personal school experiences and memories, teacher students can critically check their pupil (and guardian) evaluation criteria and their behavioral repertoire.

Using such songs in educational contexts addresses what Kemper (“‘Klassismus!’ heißt Angriff” [“Classism!’ means Attack”] 25) names as reasons for the absence of a public (and academic) debate on classism in German-speaking countries. In addition to the “class bias of the producers of class and discrimination theory” – referring to the privileged position from which academics write their theories – he lists the “suppressed symbolization ability of the dominated classes” (25). Those negatively affected by classism are much less likely than the privileged to hold spokesperson positions, positions of power which gain (public) attention, and are therefore only able to express their perspectives in isolated cases. Instead, they are stereotypically portrayed in mainstream media, especially in scripted reality formats, which allows viewers to distance themselves from them and devalue “their” lifestyles, values and norms. Kemper’s two reasons for the invisibility of anti-classism lead to the same question, namely the question of WHO: Who develops academic theories, from which point of view and out of which social position? Whose stories are told and by whom are they read, heard, filmed, and turned into music? Who has a voice, who is appreciated, who is listened to? What is not told? These questions are taken up in the next pedagogical example we present.

## Stories of “Class Travelers” to Understand Classism

One way to deal with classism on a personal level in the university context is to work with – autobiographical, autoethnographical, autofictional, socioanalytical – narratives. In recent years, quite a few of such texts have been published (most famously by Didier Eribon, but also by Annie Ernaux, Édouard Louis, Kerry Hudson, Christian Baron or Deniz Ohde). However, many of the stories that get attention are told by white men, while girls and women remain invis-

ible. There is also criticism of Eribon, who makes invisible his mother's care work, which contributed to his "social advancement" (Kalmbach, Kleinau and Völker 5). For our OER, Iris developed the exercise "Class journey" (Froebus et al., "Klassenreise"), which in German has a double meaning and also refers to "school trip". The title comes from a collection of stories edited by Betina Au-mair and Brigitte Theißl (*Klassenreise*), which illustrates the intersectionality of class, gender and race. The title itself invites discussions on the loaded language associated with class and classism (in particular the problematic terms "lower class" and "upper class" and the values associated with it). The idea that "social advancement" is something desired, fulfilling or good that haunts Elena in Ferrante's novels is irritated right from the start.

As a preparation for this exercise students are asked to read one portrait of a "class traveler" and to choose a quote from the text that they find particularly meaningful. Each portrait is then discussed in class with the other students who have read the same portrait. We suggest questions for discussion such as: What barriers does the person experience? How does the person deal with them? What support does the person receive? What is the role of the school/teachers/university? Which feelings are described in the example? What other inequalities are important in the person's story? Where does violence occur and who directs violence against whom? (Froebus et al., "Klassenreise" 9) Students then present their results in the plenary. In the end, students stick their selected quotes on a board and silently read through the other quotes. Alternatively, or as a follow-up, students may also write reflections on the stories with regard to their own experiences of privilege and discrimination that they do not have to hand in.

The "class portraits" show how classism is experienced by subjects and can help to understand (in Bourdieu's sense) oneself and others that is to link personal experiences with social structures of power (for the use of socioanalysis in dealing with social inequality see also Schmitt). For Bourdieu, understanding means looking for the social conditions that make people who they are (*Elend der Welt* [*Weight of the World*] 13), including oneself, which according to Bourdieu can have "therapeutic function" (Bourdieu, qtd. in Schmitt 215). Understanding in Bourdieu's sense also moves beyond feelings of compassion or disgust, both caught up in "deficit perspectives", and promote acceptance of others and also of oneself. Engaging with the narratives of others can enable awareness of classism without having to reveal oneself. It helps to understand personal experiences in a broader context and counteracts the individualization of social inequality, which may relieve fear, shame or self-doubt. Showing

empathy, acknowledging it and speaking about it are good ways of dealing with feelings like fear (Baer and Frick-Baer 15).

The exercise has already been used in various fields of study at universities and teacher training colleges in Austria and Germany to address education and social inequality, e.g. in numerous courses in teacher education at the University of Graz, the University Colleges of Teacher Education Styria and Vienna, or in the field of educational sociology at the Institute for Educational Science of the University of Bochum. We have received good feedback from students and teachers. We have also learnt that the exercise can be uncomfortable for students who are negatively affected by classism, if classist conceptions are repeated in discussions or othering takes place. It is therefore important to discuss the historical power relations involved in producing truths about “the working class other” and the “bourgeois self” to address privileges and to deconstruct the myth of meritocracy. In this context, teachers are particularly challenged to reflect and talk about their own prejudices. In the following, we will dive a little deeper into one of the class portraits that irritates common conceptions of class and social mobility.

## **Social Advancement as Loss and the Epistemology of Not-Belonging**

One topic that comes up frequently in the class portraits we worked with and that was identified as central by students is the experience of being in-between and the feeling of not-belonging. This leads back to the opening quote from Ferrante’s novel, in which Elena reflects on her social mobility and suddenly becomes aware of that “almost” which refers to the subtle mechanisms of distinction that Bourdieu wrote about and that prevent Elena from feeling that she belongs to her new social environment. She is only in “disguise, the mask worn so well that it was almost a face”. Her effort to adapt to the bourgeois academic culture are accompanied by feelings of self-alienation; she does not feel like a real person with a real face anymore. However, the experience of being in-between or not-belonging can also be perceived differently, less deficient, when challenging the hierarchies and values associated with social mobility. Such a perception can be found in *Klassenreise* for example in the portrait of Barbara Blaha, an Austrian author and founder of the critical thinktank Momentum. Blaha describes her “advancement as loss”:

Recently, I was in the situation that we added a small balcony for our rented apartment. ... My children and I stand on the balcony and enjoy it for the time being, now that it is there, and I am struck by the thought that my children have such a different childhood than I do. I mean, it's still a rented apartment, but their toilet is inside. And it's not in Simmering, it's in Ottakring [two Viennese districts, I.M.], and we go on holiday once a year. So, a completely different childhood than I had. And this thought of inheritance or passing on: I can't pass on what I am and where I come from, it ends with me. That's a weird thought, because it's actually good when people get out of these conditions. And yet there is a moment of grief and nostalgia inside that is difficult to grasp rationally. There's no word for it, I can't name it. (Blaha, Arbeiter\*innen sind nicht die besseren Menschen [Workers are not the better people] 67–68)

Blaha talks about the alienation she experiences not only to her social background, where she was coming from, but also to her own children and her actual social position. She links this not only to feelings of being in-between but also to nostalgia, sadness and loss. She thus irritates common conceptions of social mobility as something that is only fulfilling or unambiguously strived for. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's conception of "privilege as loss" comes to mind: the notion that privileges, if they are not reflected, limit critical thinking and the possibility to imagine a different society, as María do Mar Castro Varela writes: "It is no coincidence that the majority envies minorities, even though they are constantly the target of discrimination and violence. Those who reflect on privilege as a loss will neither victimize nor romanticize marginalized groups – and at the same time will be able to classify their own social advantages historically." This connects to what Bourdieu in his engagement with "masculine domination" ("Die männliche Herrschaft") described as the "sharp eye view of the excluded" or what feminist standpoint epistemologies call the "epistemic privilege" of "outsiders within" (Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within") or those on the margin (e.g., hooks, "Choosing the Margin"). A further irritation of the conception of social mobility and the accompanying feelings of being in-between or not-belonging can be found in the novel *Nachtfrauen* (*Nightwomen*) by the Carinthian-Slovenian author Maja Haderlap. In the novel, Mira who has moved from her Slovenian-speaking peasant and working-class background in the south of Austria to study in Vienna returns for a while to take care for her mother Anni. Mira, the narrator of the novel, describes the ambivalence of her position as a kind of

painful freedom: “And there is the freedom to sit between all the chairs, which you experience as a pain, and yet it is a freedom” (Haderlap). She thus challenges the conviction that it is not okay to be in-between as well as categorical thinking. Taking these ideas further we may speak of an epistemology of not-belonging that refers to intersecting forms of discrimination and may open up important ways of thinking beyond hegemonic conceptions of education and social position(ing)s.

## Conclusion

Stories by disadvantaged and discriminated members of society are a very important contribution that make classism visible and provide insight into a reality of life that is often ignored. Betina Aumair (“Schreibpädagogik und Klassismus” [“Writing Pedagogy and Classism”]) uses the term silencing to mean “having no words for the experience of social exclusion and devaluation or no place where one’s own stories can be told and heard and where one can resonate with one’s own experience with others”. Some of the exercises in our OER work against this silencing and offer learners the opportunity to become visible with their stories, learn through stories, and discover their own entanglement in classist structures.

Ferrante’s quote, Voodoo Jürgen’s song, the MOOC videos, and some of the stories of class mobility bring theory to life and make complicated concepts like Bourdieu’s habitus or distinction tangible. The video scripts also work the other way around and offer an opportunity to transfer concepts into stories, supporting students’ understanding of them. The engagement with the narratives of others allows self-reflection of personal experiences without having to reveal them. The stories of class travelers may help to relieve feelings of fear and shame, offer encouragement or raise empathy. Finally, storytelling allows to move beyond a “deficit story” about class and classism by irritating common (often classist) conceptions about needs, knowledge and desire that are particularly prevalent in academia.

There is always more than the “single story”. In her TED talk “The danger of a single story”, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie invites us to think about who tells what about whom, when and how, and how narratives are related to power. In addition, she suggests discussing the dangers associated with categorization as well as to be aware of the – active, non-random, asymmetrical – ignorance of hegemonic culture (Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”).

Learning about inequality with regard to class, gender, race, or disability through stories always runs the risk of generating and perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices instead of dissolving them. In the context of education, it is therefore necessary to address the historical development of the underlying power relations – in the case of classism, for example, the development of capitalism – as well as the social construction of categories, in other words: we need stories and we need theory to learn about class and classism. Therefore, our OER include exercises and theory cards.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that social inequality cannot be overcome by the right pedagogy. In the best case, the resulting discussions with students lead to ideas on how to develop strategies for social change together, or to questions about educational policy and resistance, and thus move beyond the pedagogical. Stories may also work as inspiration here.

## References

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *The Danger of a Single Story*. TED Talk, 2009. [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?) Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Aging Activism. <https://www.agingactivisms.org/>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Aumair, Betina, and Brigitte Theißl (eds.) *Klassenreise. Wie die soziale Herkunft unser Leben prägt*. Wien, ÖGB Verlag, 2020.
- Aumair, Betina. “Das Gefühl von Armut verlässt einen nicht”. Interview with Beate Hausbichler. *Der Standard*, 3.12.2020. <https://www.derstandard.at/content/tcf/story/2000122166516/betina-aumair-das-gefuehl-von-armut-verlaesst-einen-nicht>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- . “Schreibpädagogik und Klassismus – Schreiben und Erzählen als widerständige Praxis 2”. 2023. <https://www.kubi-online.de/artikel/schreibpaedagogik-klassismus-schreiben-erzaehlen-widerstaendige-praxis>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Baer, Udo and Gabriele Frick-Baer. *Das ABC der Gefühle*. Weinheim, Beltz, 2018.
- Baron, Christian. *Ein Mann seiner Klasse*. Berlin, Ullstein, 2020.
- Blaha, Barbara. “Arbeiter\*innen sind Nicht die Besseren Menschen”. *Klassenreise. Wie die soziale Herkunft unser Leben prägt*, edited by Betina Aumair and Brigitte Theißl, Brigitte, Wien, ÖGB Verlag, 2020, pp. 53–69.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Das Elend der Welt. Zeugnisse und Diagnosen alltäglichen Leidens an der Gesellschaft*. Konstanz, UVK, 1997.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Die männliche Herrschaft". *Ein Alltägliches Spiel*, edited by Irene Dölling, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1997, pp. 153–217.
- . *Die feinen Unterschiede Kritik der gesellschaftlichen Urteilskraft*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 1987.
- . *Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht*. Schriften zur Politik & Kultur 1, edited by Margareta Steinrücke, Hamburg, VSA Verlag, 1992.
- . *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1993.
- . *Wie die Kultur zum Bauern kommt*. Über Bildung Schule und Politik, Schriften zur Politik & Kultur 4, edited by Margareta Steinrücke. Hamburg, VSA, 2001.
- Castro Varela, María do Mar. "(Un-)Wissen. Verlernen als komplexer Lernprozess". *Migrazine*, no. 1, 2017. <https://migrazine.at/artikel/un-wissen-verlernen-als-komplexer-lernprozess>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. "Learning from the Outsider Within. The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought". *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, edited by Sandra Harding, New York, London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 103–126.
- Croom, Natasha N. and Tyson E. J. Marsh (eds.). *Envisioning Critical Race Praxis in Higher Education Through Counter-Storytelling*, Charlotte, Information Age Publishing, 2016.
- Die habitussensible Brille*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v=I7e2YERtrto>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Ein Klassismusmärchen*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v=9PROCBEE-Ms>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Eribon, Didier. *Rückkehr nach Reims*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2016.
- Ernaux, Annie. *Der Platz*. Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2020.
- Ferrante, Elena. *The Story of a New Name*. New York, Europa Editions, 2013.
- Froebus, Katarina et al. *Habitus.Macht.Bildung – Lehr-/Lernmaterialien*. Graz, 2021. <https://habitusmachtbildung.uni-graz.at/de/materialien/im-projekt-entwickeltes-material/>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- . "2 Liter Eistee – Klassismus mittels eines Lieds reflektieren". Graz, 2021. [https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/projekte/habitusmachtbildung/2\\_Liter\\_Eistee\\_12\\_2021.pdf](https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/projekte/habitusmachtbildung/2_Liter_Eistee_12_2021.pdf). Accessed 9 April 2024.
- . "Klassenreise". Graz, 2021. [https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/projekte/habitusmachtbildung/Klassenreise\\_12\\_2021.pdf](https://static.uni-graz.at/fileadmin/projekte/habitusmachtbildung/Klassenreise_12_2021.pdf). Accessed 9 April 2024.

- Hartlep, Nicholas D., Michael E. Jennings, Brandon O. Hensley and Carmella J. Braniger (eds.). *Critical Storytelling in Uncritical Times. Undergraduates Share Their Stories in Higher Education*. Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2017.
- Haderlap, Maja. *Nachfrauen*. ebook. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp.
- hooks, bell. "Choosing the Margin as a Space for Radical Openness." *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader. Intellectual and Political Controversies*, edited by Sandra Harding. New York, London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 153–159.
- . *Where We Stand. Class Matters*. New York, Routledge, 2000.
- Hudson, Kerry. *Tony Hogan Bought Me an Ice-Cream Float Before He Stole my Ma*. New York, Penguin Books, 2014.
- Jamissen, Grete, Pip Hardy, Yngve Nordkvelle and Heather Pleasants (eds.). *Digital Storytelling in Higher Education: International Perspectives*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Kalmbach, Karolin, Elke Kleinau and Susanne Völker. "Sexualität, Klasse und Scham Schreiben – Des/Identifikationen Ermöglichen? Relektüren von Rückkehr nach Reims und Gesellschaft als Urteil". *Eribon revisited – Perspektiven der Gender und Queer Studies*, edited by Karolin Kalmbach, Elke Kleinau and Susanne Völker, Wiesbaden, Springer VS, 2020, pp. 1–12.
- Kemper, Andreas and Heike Weinbach. *Klassismus. Eine Einführung*. Münster, Unrast, 2009.
- Kemper, Andreas. "'Klassismus!' heißt Angriff. Warum wir von Klassismus Sprechen Sollten – Und Warum Dies Bisher Nicht Geschah." *Kurswechsel*, no. 4, 2015, pp. 25–31.
- . *Klassismus. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, edited by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Landesbüro Thüringen, Erfurt, 2016. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/erfurt/12716.pdf>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Kruppa, Jochen and Björn Kiehne. "Statistik lebendig lehren durch Storytelling und forschungsbasiertes Lernen". *die hochschullehre*, no. 5, 2019, pp. 501–524. <https://www.wbv.de/shop/die-hochschullehre-Jahresheft-2019-HSL1959W>. Accessed 27 June 2024.
- Louis, Édouard. *Wer hat meinen Vater umgebracht*. Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer, 2018.
- McDrudy, Janice and Maxine Alterio. *Learning Through Storytelling in Higher Education. Using Reflection & Experience to Improve Learning*. London, Sterling, Taylor & Francis, 2004.
- Nadolny, Stefan. "Intersektionalität als Haltung von Politischen Bilder innen". *Intersektionalität. Bildungsmaterialien der Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung*, edited by Claudia de Coster, Niklas Prenzel and Nora Zierkelbach, Berlin, 2016,

- pp.10-17. [https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls\\_uploads/pdfs/Bildungsmaterialien/RLS-Bildungsmaterialien\\_Intersektionalitaet\\_12-2016.pdf](https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Bildungsmaterialien/RLS-Bildungsmaterialien_Intersektionalitaet_12-2016.pdf). Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Narrative Didactics Research Group. "Storymaps." <https://narrativedidactics.org/storymap>. Accessed 9 April 2024.
- Ohde, Deniz. *Streulicht*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2020.
- Otto, Daniel. "Hochschullehre und Digitalisierung: Digital Storytelling als Lehr- Lernmethode für Kompetenzen in der digitalen Welt". *Bildung und Digitalisierung. Auf der Suche nach Kompetenzen und Performanzen*, edited by Christine Trueltzsch-Wijnen and Gerhard Brandhofer, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2020, pp. 135–152. doi.org/10.5771/9783748906247.
- Rieger-Ladich, Markus, and Norbert Ricken. "Macht und Raum: Eine Programmatische Skizze zur Erforschung von Schularchitekturen". *Schularchitektur im Interdisziplinären Diskurs*, edited by Jeanette Böhme, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009, pp. 186–203. doi:10.1007/978-3-531-91868-6\_12.
- Scheer, Lisa. *Gut durch den Hochschul-Alltag: diversitätssensibel, Vor(ur)teilsbewusst und Inklusiv*. <https://imoox.at/course/antibias>. Accessed 11 June 2024.
- Schmitt, Lars. "Studentische Sozioanalysen und Habitus-Struktur-Reflexivität als Methode der Bottom-Up-Sensibilisierung von Lehrenden und Studierenden". *Ungleichheitssensible Hochschullehre. Positionen, Voraussetzungen, Perspektiven*, edited by Kathrin Rheinländer, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2015, pp. 197–217.
- Seeck, Francis. *Zugang Verwehrt. Keine Chance in der Klassengesellschaft: Wie Klassismus soziale Ungleichheit Fördert*. Zürich, Atrium, 2022.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271–313.
- Storytelling, Self, Society. An Interdisciplinary Journal of Storytelling Studies*. Wayne State University Press from 2013. <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/hsts20>. Accessed 8 July 2024.
- Wellgraf, Stefan. „Die Hauptschule: Ein Ort der Verachtung". *Migrazine*, no. 2, 2014. <https://www.migrazine.at/artikel/die-hauptschule-ein-ort-der-verachtung>. Accessed 31 January 2023.