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Intellectual Inequality:

The Power of Cogitation

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Abstract

The recent proximity between social psychology and cognitive psychology has spawned new environments of interests. The research in decision-making under influence has broadened the territory under a relatively new label: the probabilistic revolution. Furthermore, the theoretical developments in the theory of social representations over the last decades have spawned new directions and inspirations from the field. There is a scarcity of studies that apply both concepts of meaning-making from social representations theory and approaches from cognitive psychology's availability heuristics and decision-making. The principal objective of this study was to examine the mechanisms of critical thinking and its application in contextual political settings. Through a historical overview inspired by Critical Psychology and the theories above, an approach to how meaning-making can be understood is developed. The role of psychology in today's scientific environment is considered alongside other epistemological and theoretical approaches to dismantle the effects and circumstances of meaning-making and critical thinking. With the help of theoretical content analysis, two kinds of media are analyzed with an aspiration to heighten the theoretical discussion of how the objective of the study can legitimate further examination of critical thinking and meaning-making in a sociopolitical context. The analysis revealed that discourse analysis and media analysis could complement the theory of social representations and cognitive psychology in unveiling the role of language and the use of common sense. Furthermore, it is suggested that a new kind of media is arising from TV and that the power of influence of social media is higher than anticipated. In a future study, applying the current theories combined with discourse analysis, media analysis, and Rational Choice Theory could prove fruitful. Overall, the importance of culture is not to be neglected and should play a pivotal role in studies of meaning-making and critical thinking.

Keywords: meaning-making, Critical Psychology, social representations, decision-making, heuristics, availability, content analysis, politics.

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Table of contents

1.0. Introduction

The post-millennium society is experiencing a vastness of information and communication from around the world. None can deny the proliferation of news and information that we experience in the 21st century. In such a world, where information is global, the quantity and subsequently the availability has risen exponentially — but what about the quality? Since it is harder to associate the source of collaborators or others with vested interests, it becomes increasingly important to have a skeptical approach to the validity of information spread by the media. It should not have to be a matter of cynicism, but perhaps a question of a watchful eye and a detracting approach to where the information comes from. Should we ask ourselves who the source is and do they have a shared interest in the matter? As availability increases, so does the amount of mediators. It seems harder and harder to navigate in the sea of news and information today, with opinions everywhere and influences from each source. How can you know if something you read or hear is real? Why would or wouldn't it be? Just a few years back, it was nearly impossible to find reliable proof of global warming in the public eye. The media and scientists seemed divided with one side being as vigorous and the other. So how can you know which one of them is right? The *inflation* of news simultaneously spawns a new boon: everyone has a chance to be heard if they yell loud enough. However, sorting the truth from the hogwash is a task, which can wear out the most robust reader or listener.

Inflation seems an appropriate word in the context of this paper. Inflation is usually a word that arises in the field of economy, where the supply of money increases, but the value decreases. If we were to apply this to information or news, the same definition could be wielded. In the field of decision-making and heuristics, economy and psychology has teamed up and shared inspirations and aspirations in several areas. Daniel Kahneman received the Nobel Prize in 2002 for "uniting psychology and economy" concerning how people make decisions when uncertainty is part of the equation. Part of his theory is

concerned with two main ways of thinking. In his award-winning book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, published in 2011, Kahneman elaborates on two modes of thinking — a dichotomy between fast thinking, which is emotional and intuitive, and slow thinking, which is analytical and more logical. The two ways of thinking serve as a way of understanding, how people deal with different subjects during everyday life.

The dyad of cognition is one that is shared by other psychologists. Serge Moscovici has concerned himself with another dichotomy: common sense and scientific knowledge. The two are interrelated and yet separated. Common sense is the way we make meaning of our everyday lives and how the lay or masses perform cognitive tasks. It is referred to as the lower form of thinking: free of deep concerned thought or reflection; common sense is instead shallow, emotional and intuitive thought. The scientific world is a world wherein expertise is vital if one is to flourish. Expert knowledge grants access to a more rational cognitive state, where emotions and feelings play a lesser role.

When we go about in our everyday lives, we are exposed to various types of information. Commercials, news, social media and other erratic sources of information are continually changing and propelling. Availability heuristics, as defined by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, is a way to understand how our ways of thinking become affected by that which is available to us. When we continuously are exposed to new information, it also changes how we view related topics and in what way we use our current knowledge or make decisions. We know about football (soccer) in Denmark, even though not all of us play it because we are exposed to football matches and talk of football through school, social gathering or social circles. On the other hand, the average Dane might not be able to tell you much about American football and its rules. Availability heuristics pose an excellent example of how we can operate on several levels of conscious thinking. As the research on decision-making has developed over the years, so has new concepts for this area. I recently heard a lecture where "decision-making fatigue" was mentioned as a

critical reason to how we behave in our everyday lives. It is the idea that our rational well-thought machine has a limit; a limit of how many decisions can be made during the day. Our society is in constant motion, but are we able to move with it?

Flynn (1987) has been talking about how we on a global scale can monitor gains in IQ over the past decades. If we were tested with a Wechsler intelligence scale test from 1930, we would have an average IQ of 130 which falls under the category as "gifted". So one of the questions posed by Flynn is: Did we get smarter? He argues that we learned or got better at three new things or ways of thinking: Taking the hypothetical seriously, learning to classify better and making abstractions logically consistent. Abstract systems of thinking have evolved, and with it, we can expand our limits of rationality and our ways of thinking (Flynn, 1987).

If it is a general idea that politicians cannot be trusted, why are we content in our everyday lives? Why has no revolution sparked? There is indeed a lot of research and theories inspired why this is (Wagoner et al., 2018). Why do we accept the democracy? Democracy has won and the Western world continues imposing its system of government on other countries; most recently in the Middle East. These observations alongside my interests in political psychology eventually prompted me to ask these questions. Being fully aware that questions of that nature are not so easily resolved, I wanted to dive into some of the specifics of how people make meaning of their lives in today's context. As exemplified, the literature used for inspiration comes from political, social and cultural psychology. Most of the thoughts and questions that drive the motivation behind this paper have their field of interest within cultural and political psychology; thus the backbone of contemplation and reflection in the pages to come will have this basis of understanding.

Eventually, the subject of examination is how people make meaning, how their ways of thinking are influenced and how they infer at certain decisions as a

result of that. I watched a television show about ghost hunting in Denmark, and thought to myself — how can anyone make meaning of this? Why is this even a field of interest, and why is it televised? By using the theory of social representations to explain how people make meaning of their surroundings and everyday lives, I hope to arrive at an increased understanding of just that. Kahneman provides a theory of understanding regarding the cognitive processes that can influence human decision-making. The processes of decision-making and thinking about our lives eventually promoted the epistemological interest in Critical Psychology and how we can use psychology in today's world. It is with this frame in mind that I will attempt to uncover or partially resolve my questions in this field of interest. The reason why the title is called "Intellectual Inequality" is because of my contemplations around public knowledge. What happens when the elite keeps information for themselves, reducing the chance of expert knowledge to, eventually, become common sense and part of everyone's life-world?

A final question we might ask ourselves is why these topics and questions, in 2018, are even relevant:

> On an abstract level, contemporary discourse now talks of rapid social change and uncertainty (Beck 1992) and the decline and confidence in expertise (Giddens 1990). Risk in the current era describes a shift in the confidence of modernity to a condition of perpetual doubt (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). Thus, as a society, we now speak specifically of the omnipotence of risk (1998), primarily in relation to negative consequences and feelings.
>
> (Chadee, Austen & Ditton, 2007, p. 4)

Due to the fluidity of this theoretical territory, how might the best way to undertake these questions? By using media analysis of the videos that inspired me in the first place, I hope to arrive at a new understanding, not only of the theoretical applications but also of the field of interest.

Last, but not least, I would like to give special thanks to my supervisor **Luca Tateo** for his continuous inspiration and encouragement in this project.

2.0. Project scope and clarification of concepts

The problem definition, which steers this paper, will guilelessly expand and simultaneously narrow down the field of interest. In chapters 2.0. and 3.0., I wish to clarify those circumstances in order to establish a theoretical foundation.

2.1. Problem definitions

The following problem definitions and statements originate from several reflections and inspirations as elaborated or mentioned in the introduction of this paper. Throughout this paper, these questions will be peripheral to the following reflections, expositions, and analysis.

Under which conditions does critical thinking occur within people concerning social contextual political issues?

To what extent can critical thinking today be understood by Critical Psychology, social representations, and cognitive psychology?

How do people make meaning in political contexts and/or unknown contexts?

How can decision-making theories explain judgment of information expressed in different styles of communication?

To what extent can people understand the intent behind statements and political statements?

2.2. Clarification of concepts

Most of the concepts and words in the questions that steer this paper have been voiced in the introduction; however, there is a particular one that has to be clarified. A central keyword in this paper is "critical". Being critical is understood as by Immanuel Kant's idea that faculties and types of knowledge are to be investigated for their limits of validity (Schurman, 1893, p. 136). Kant questioned the process of knowing, whereas Karl Marx questions the social process of knowing. In extension to this perspective, Klaus Holzkamp's view on the role of psychology as a means of explanation will be applied alongside multiple essential authors from the same timespan.

Holzkamp argued that instead of using psychology to label and describe people, thus placing the power elsewhere, psychology should see people and their emotions, thoughts, and actions as a product of a particular social context, and circumstance (Schraube & Osterkamp, 2013, pp. 28-45). These concepts will be clarified throughout the next two chapters (3.0. and 4.0.).

Lastly, I want to clarify on the execution of style of references in this paper, which strictly uses APA[1] style. APA style ensures that the idea's origin is always identifiable and available for the reader. Furthermore, it ensures that each author is credited with the correct reference. Not all concepts will be italicized, to enhance fluency in reading, but those that are italicized are to avoid misunderstandings or references to wrong concepts.

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[1] http://www.apastyle.org/index.aspx

3.0. Theoretical framework

This paper will focus on the theory of social representations from the viewpoint of Serge Moscovici through Sandra Jovchelovitch (2008) and Wagner & Hayes (2005). Furthermore, selected papers by Daniel Kahneman and Klaus Holzkamp's Critical Psychology is deployed. The three views will help in gaining an understanding of how navigating in today's society works concerning making rational or irrational decisions and meaning-making. In consideration of the disparity within the previously mentioned theories, a historical overview will be given to place the origin and purpose of each theory into their appropriate context. Not only do these three theories stem from different decades, but also different countries and consequently different contexts. From French authors Serge Moscovici, Gustave LeBon and Émile Durkheim to Austrian Sigmund Freud to German Karl Marx and Klaus Holzkamp all the way to Israeli-American Daniel Kahneman — spread over two centuries of societal disruptions, influences, and transformations. The influence for each author can probably go back to the Greek thinkers; undoubtedly, some of the ideas concerning class warfare dates back to Plato in Classical Greece, maybe further so. The next chapter will elaborate on the facets of each author and theories that will be utilized in this paper to narrow down the field of interest.

3.1. Methodological approach

As critical theory suggests, the context of the emergence of theories and knowledge has to be considered. Due to the elusive subject and hypotheses, I will apply reproduction or abductive reasoning. To that effect, using **abduction** as a means to interpret and analyze the older theories with present papers enables us to view ideological ideas in a new present-day perspective. Abduction is a way of *"creating an explanatory framework around inexplicable results. With abduction, one conjectures from the unexpected phenomenon to the best explanation. This assumption can then lead to further investigation into*

the subject" (Brinkmann, 2012, p. 83f)[2]. There is a sizable amount of factors to weigh in if we are to gain acuity regarding the project scope and problem statement. It will be favorable for the approach to be flexible and circular when considering the multiple ideologies, views on humanity, authors, papers and articles. This entails that the focus and problem statements have evolved several times during the process of writing, as more information becomes part of the material used to analyze and uncover the problem definition — as exhibited in chapter 2.1. This establishes by default a certain process throughout the path of this paper. Choosing the theory of social representations, the theoretical and empirical works of Daniel Kahneman and Critical Psychology will ascertain the theoretical framework in this paper. The choice to use social representations comes from influence by Cultural Psychology and the idea of making meaning in our everyday lives. Critical Psychology seemed inevitable when working with critical thinking and psychology together, and the teaching and inspirations from this field will affect the overall tone of this paper. Daniel Kahneman and several authors within the field of decision-making, have created extensive theoretical and empirical work and is drafted for this paper for this reason. The theories of Kahneman will be presented and applied in a qualitative media analysis and following discussion. Another consideration regarding using qualitative methods in general is how the researcher or author projects their views or interpretation unto a subject or research material — this concern has been expressed several times when using theory of social representations (Wagner et al., 1999, p. 118). This is why the interpretations has to be seen in light of the authors presumptions and possibly political views on the matter. Despite all this, as stated by Jaan Valsiner, pioneer in Cultural Psychology, working with qualitative analysis could produce "useful new leads":

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[2] Translated from Danish to English by author.

The social implications of experimental psychology for the understanding of politics and the use of film materials as an alley to approach complex political issues serve as useful new leads for the interested reader who wants to know in which ways this cultural psychology of politics provides something new.

(Valsiner, 2014, x)

In the next couple of chapters, this paper will attempt to illustrate a historical perspective in which theoretical and epistemological stories can unfold. It is with these viewpoints I will then analyze media selected from a Danish politician through her Facebook page and a "documentary" about two Danish organizations chasing ghosts in remote locations. Applying the knowledge acquired from the theory of social representations primarily, and Kahneman's system 1 and system 2, an analysis of the media in light of the theory is conducted. One of the main approaches to this qualitative content analysis will be to try and dismantle the statements and see how the theory can illuminate different perspectives and different ways of understanding the content. Firstly, the Danish politician will have political content in her Facebook posts and videos posted on Facebook. How can we understand this content? It indeed is a matter of perspective and context, which the following theoretical presentation will illustrate as well. Additionally, the content is sparingly made up of political statements, which arrive from a specific use of language. What is she saying, how can it be interpreted and how could it be misinterpreted? These are some of the main focal points for expanding the field of interest of this paper and the purpose of its subject. The Danish ghost hunting episode will be juxtaposed with the politician in an attempt to find consistency in arguments, language, and meaning. These two types of media originate from two very different worlds both in presumed intent and audience, which makes for an exciting analysis, rather than two politicians from the same party. The driving question is indeed how we can understand the intent and different ways of thinking in different contexts. Having this broad content for analysis could either prove fruitful or futile.

Finally, many techniques have been developed to accomplish a content analysis. The approach in this paper is inspired by Braun & Clarke's (2006) take on content analysis in psychology and *Qualitative Media Analysis* by Altheide & Schneider (2013). Braun & Clarke (2006) stresses the importance of a few fundamental steps. Firstly, familiarizing yourself with the content, re-reading and trying to uncover and identify themes and categories that appear throughout the entire data set. Next, finding verbal cues that produce a specific tone or theme in the data. Then identifying the overall themes in the data-set, which will be the actual content for analysis, and lastly, naming and reviewing the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An approach to creating themes from the content is theoretical content analysis, which is more deductive or "top-down" in its manner, compared to a more inductive methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

> [...] analysis is not a linear process of
> simply moving from one phase to the next.
> Instead, it is more recursive process, where
> movement is back and forth as needed,
> throughout the phases. It is also a process
> that develops over time (Ely et al ., 1997) [...].
> (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

In the next chapter, I will move into the historical and epistemological background of the fields encountered in this paper.

3.2. Review of Historical Circumstances

Karl Marx is well-known for his masterwork "Das Kapital" from 1867 and his political text "Manifesto of the Communist Party" from 1848, written in cooperation with Friedrich Engels, which both bluntly criticized capitalism and proposed a new system of government to ensure freedom and development of societal groups. Everett Dean Martin (1920) reflects on Marx's theory as such:

> In place of the old bourgeois society with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.
>
> (Martin E.D., 1920, p. 205)

Herein lie the class struggle and inherent inequality and oppression, which must be reduced to attain "peace". The drive behind the idea of differences between social classes is still a significant force after the centuries following the Industrial Revolution in the 1760s. One can speak of either economic, social, power, psychological and intellectual contrasts; the division of the upper class and lower class, elite and lay, expert and everyday people. These are all important factors of influence in the theoretical work of authors such as those mentioned previously in this paper: Moscovici, Freud, Marx, Holzkamp, Kahneman, and so forth. The study will now present how the different theories developed, and how we can use them to achieve a mutual theoretical understanding on the topics of critical thinking and influence.

3.2.1. Critical Psychology then and now

Critical Psychology was a reaction to modern psychology in the 1940s. The role of psychology was to explain behavior and then frame this behavior into a theory which then, in turn, could explain similar behavior in general. However, some psychologists saw the inherent problem with psychology and its vague scientific foundation and general nature as a science (Dreier, 1979, pp. 7-9). The attempt to combine "Das Kapital" with psychology was futile, and it was

argued that psychology would have to become part of the social sciences or political economy, reducing individuals to a product of the society (Dreier, 1979, p. 7). The argument above represents one view of Marxism. Since the time of Marxist reign, the theories and views of society have branched out in many different directions (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012). Marxism has significantly evolved over the years, but even Marx's views on society have changed since his early years. Marx' later texts were considered economistic and scientific by some, whereas the earlier work influenced by Hegel, was more open to the idea of a society; a society, which shaped the individuals within and the individuals shaped the society around them. In other words, Marxism has been depicted by countless others into new interpretations of what Karl Marx meant (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012). A unique approach from Marxism into Critical Theory was wherewith Adorno and Horkheimer conceptualized the idea of how the media can enable or disable critical thinking through culture. "Mass media" and pop music with simple structure and inferior requirements to the listener does not promote critical thinking, whereas classical music, such as Beethoven, does. This idea was dubbed "Culture Industry", and has since been heavily criticized since it was not believed that people were tabula rasa as Freud thought, and it was also disbelief that people were always open to manipulation (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012, p. 72f).

After Marx redefined the socio-economic boundaries and opportunities, Klaus Holzkamp saw to it to rephrase the definitive power of psychology and the power of labels therein. Holzkamp's reformation of a way to understand psychology has to be seen in the light of the events that happened at Freie Universität in Berlin in the 1960s-1970s. When the department of psychology was divided into a more socialist leftwing and a conservative wing, Holzkamp made it his responsibility to help fund the leftwing anti-authoritarian side. Thus, Critical Psychology has to be seen as a spawn of socio-political circumstances that questioned authority and pursued rebellious actions — at least from a political standpoint and eventually academic too (Schraube & Osterkamp, 2013, p. 2f). One of the issues Critical Psychology had with modern psychology was

the gap between theory and practice. This interest was shared between Danish and German psychologists throughout a series of conferences and conventions after their initial meeting in 1977 (Dreier, 1979). The series of meetings had a directed focus on the gap between theory and practical use of psychology. The objective for those scientific gatherings was twofold: Firstly, to theorize the work being done in practical work today — a way to manifest what is being done into a written form. Secondly, the development of new theories, which can help aid the practical work being done in psychology; for both scholars, academics and practitioners (Dreier, 1979; Viuf, 2016).

The role of Critical Psychology has, according to Thomas Teo (1998), experienced a rise and fall over the past decades:

> Social movements and internal problems of traditional psychology are identified as factors in the rise of his psychology, whereas the decline of Critical Psychology in the 1980s and 1990s is attributed to social developments, limitations of a systematic-foundational framework, and the emergence of alternative critical approaches.
>
> (Teo, 1998, p. 235)

However, as Teo points out, Holzkamp's role in the development of Critical Psychology is decisive; its epistemological and methodical maturity from the events at Freie Universität in the 1960s to the impact it has in today's psychology is essential. Indeed, the importance of a critical eye is the very point of this paper, and the ideas of a rebellious attitude are very fitting in the 21st century's scientific scene. In an interview two years ago, Ole Dreier, a pioneer in the Danish scene of Critical Psychology, stated that the political ramifications of scientific research at the universities pose new challenges for the unification of empirical work and further research (Viuf, 2016, p. 41). Since there are restrictions for the timeframe of scientific publications and smaller projects are receiving more support than lengthy multinational studies, it becomes harder and more shallow to research. This fact, combined with single projects with overlapping multinational work becoming harder to synthesize, poses difficulties

for the scientific development of Critical Psychology and psychology as a whole (Viuf, 2016, p. 41).

3.2.2. Marxist precursors and the following representations of the social

While Holzkamp defined Critical Psychology, Serge Moscovici published his thesis *La psychanalyse son image et son public* in 1961 in France, which was translated into English 30 odd years later as *Psychoanalysis, its image and its public*. The book eventually became a milestone for theory of social representations, in which Moscovici addresses the issues of continuity or discontinuity between public knowledge, personal knowledge and scientific knowledge (Jovchelovitch, 2008). Moscovici thought that social psychology could be used to rid the world of issues such as discrimination, racism and a rise in communist totalitarianism. Not only this, but the early years of social representations was popularized due to the interest in understanding political movements, social and cultural intricacies of the mid 19th century (Marková, 2012, p. 488f). These issues are what led him on the path to social representations, where he tried to understand what "social" meant in "social psychology" (Marková, 2017). It is in this quest, where he noticed the Marxist prevailing theories only focused on the social of people and not the "individual". Furthermore, social psychology was having a "crisis" where it had become unclear what the focus of study should be (Farr, 1996 In Flick & Foster, 2008, p. 196). How could the field explain the mentality of groups, instead of the widespread interest in individualistic attitudes, while still recognizing the individual psychology (Moscovici, 1998 In Flick & Foster, 2008)? Moscovici's objective was to revive the importance of how people made sense of their everyday lives through common sense. Using this path of investigation, he sought to reiterate the social dynamics of groups and the people within (Moscovici & Marková, 1998 In Flick & Foster, 2008). Through this period of working on the theory of social representations, he saw to it that social and individual was not seen as two separate entities, but instead a continuous and

interdependent system of interaction and meaning-making (Marková, 2017, p. 368). An important element to keep in mind regarding the origin of social psychology is that in the beginning, social psychology has been considered an irrational science due to its inception surrounding topics such as religion, myths, symbols and beliefs (Marková, 2012). Within a contemporary world of blurred lines between societies and cultures, it becomes harder to argue for global rationality or a single "truth". It is instead a matter of what seems right and wrong in the given moments of decisions that guide our lives (Marková, 2012, p. 495f).

Moscovici saw as Marx did that an apparent division of elite and common was necessary to explain the fluctuation of power and dynamics within the society. Marx referred to these as the proletariat and bourgeois; however, the idea is somewhat inspired by the same idea. Marx states this in his manifesto:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.
>
> (Marx & Engels, 1969, p. 14)

As he claims, the presence of a dominant power or elite has always been present in world history and with the realization of the lack of peace and the presence of class struggles and strife; the lower class must equalize the elite, or rise to their level.

Both Freud and Moscovici acknowledge the existence of different stages of knowledge and thinking, however, both dispute either one being superior to the other (Jovchelovitch, 2008). This notion is one that has been explored by Daniel Kahneman as well; the continuity between two ways of thinking, one being slow and rational, and one being fast, automatic and intuitive. I will return to this in the theoretical perspectives in the next chapter.

3.2.3. The cognitive and probabilistic revolution

As the scientific community moved away from the externally observable behavior of behaviorism in the 1950s and started acknowledging introspection as a critical method of understanding human behavior, the so-called cognitive revolution took place (Valsiner & Chaudhary, 2017). The field of cognition has drawn in many psychologists and two of them, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, began their groundbreaking work in decision-making and judgment, which eventually lead to what Gigerenzer (1991) refers to as the probabilistic revolution:

> The probabilistic revolution differs from the cognitive revolution in its genuine novelty and its interdisciplinary scope. Statistical mechanics, Mendelian genetics, Brownian motion, radioactive decay, random drift, randomized experimental design, statistical inference these are some of the fruits of that transformation. Social psychology was no exception. It currently bears the marks of both the cognitive revolution and the probabilistic revolution.
>
> (Gigerenzer et al., 1989; Kriiger, Daston & Heidelberger, 1987; Kriiger, Gigerenzer & Morgan, 1987 in Gigerenzer, 1991, p. 84)

Having almost a neuropsychological gist in its' statistical and quantitative flair, the theoretical and empirical work over decades by Kahneman and Tversky, lead to a Nobel Prize in economy in 2002. Kahneman and Tversky's paper *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* from 1976 was the inception for the generation of economic psychologists that began researching in the wake of their work. During their many years of research, countless experiments have been made to try and understand the irrationality of rational thinking and how we eventually make errors in judgment — going away from the "what you see is what you get" (Kahneman, 2011), but embracing the **introspection** and ideas thereof (Kahneman & Tversky, 1974). The works of Kahneman will be elaborated in chapter 4.5. where the theoretical and practical use will be defined as well.

3.2.4. Combining theories to understand critical thinking and meaning-making

What is it that makes these theories and ideas complementary? Why is it necessary to speak of political documents from 1848, common sense and cognitive experiments in the same context? When it comes to critical thinking, it is not only the cognitive process of thinking — it is a matter of several surrounding factors. The role of society and what it means for the people who live in it has an overall power on a meta level, which cannot be ignored. We can talk about people on an individual level, but are the cognitive conditions the same for a dancer in Norway, as they are for a bank teller in Sydney? Not addressing the societal climate would grant us an uninformed or inconsiderate view into the meso-level of cognition. Furthermore, what is the role of science, and what does science do? This paper represents an academic text, and the appearance of general observations is inescapable. When we speak of thinking, what kind of thinking do we speak of? Critical Psychology stresses the importance of the context — an area, where Kahneman has fewer considerations; his primary concerns are revolved around macro-level context rather than meso-level and meta-level.

Speaking of critical thinking, we can consider common sense and meaning-making as well. It becomes a matter of following the path of inspiration from the theory of social representations back to Durkheim and Marx. Since social representations are also concerned with individuals, Kahneman's theories around decision-making pairs well with how we think in different ways. The questions posed here all funnel from a broad perspective into the very core of how and why critical thinking occurs and why it does not. Kahneman does not refer to common sense in the same way that theory of social representations does. Instead, he uses common sense in his theories in the same way people refer to something as "self-explanatory" or "obvious". It is not that Kahneman does not concern himself with the idea of knowledge which is readily available; he merely absorbs this notion into system 1 thinking (Kahneman, 2011); this is picked up again in chapter 4.3.

The following argument by Moscovici is crucial when juxtaposing these two theories. The majority of research on decision-making by Tversky and Kahneman uses American students. It is something to keep in mind, and even more so if the concepts of Kahneman are applied in a different context or country.

> [...] early on in his elaboration of the concerns that led him to develop the theory of social representations he highlighted the problems of an over-reliance on student populations in psychological research, and pointed out that social psychological research was often too focused on a particular group in terms of nationality, class, age and political leanings.
>
> (Moscovici, 1972 In Flick & Foster, 2008, p. 198)

Finally, we can see the choice of theories as a way to incorporate the epistemological concepts from Critical Psychology with theories on reasoning, common sense and critical thinking from social psychology's Moscovici and cognitive psychology's Kahneman. Making meaning of one's surroundings is something they all have in common to some extent.

4.0. Theoretical perspectives

Sandra Jovchelovitch' paper *The Rehabilitation of Common Sense: Social Representations, Science and Cognitive Polyphasia* from 2008 elaborates on the division of the lay and the elite/vanguard. Just as Marx emphasized the driving force behind the class division and its implications for power structures and flows of power, several theorists and authors influenced by Marx have accentuated the importance of group dynamics. It is undoubtedly not the first time this has been done, but it is from here that we move into the realm of collective representations, social representations, the dynamics of the lay (common people) and the vanguard/elite. While drawing on the foundations of Critical Psychology, Marxist theory, and the theory of social representations, an extension will be given to cognitive psychology by Daniel Kahneman and various authors from the field of cognitive psychology, economy, heuristics, and decision-making. The juxtaposition, as mentioned above, is an attempt to shed light on how decisions are made and how the information is processed. In the following chapters, this paper will concentrate on the theories that can help explain this particular focus. The majority of the theories chosen are quite extensive and have developed over decades, even centuries, as shown in the former series of chapters. The point of this chapter is to understand the intricacies at work within each perspective, unfold them unto the problem statements and henceforth apply this knowledge in the future analysis.

4.1. Critical Psychology

Critical Psychology has been criticized for providing critique for critique's reason alone. It was perceived at the time as a futile endeavor. However, as Critical Psychology developed, it went from trying to criticize traditional psychology to rethinking psychology and improving on it (Dreier, 1979). Critical psychologists and even Serge Moscovici (1972) has argued that psychology, at the time, lacked concepts based on extensive empirical research. Thus, it is nearly

impossible to improve on and replace older theories and conclusions with new and more sound empirical work; it becomes new theories based off misunderstood or lacking theories, resulting in a stalemate instead of progress (Dreier, 1979, p. 33f). Essentially, some of the main issues with psychology, interpreted by Osterkamp (2009) and described by Holzkamp (1973), are that knowledge of society and oneself is to some extent interwoven and incessant and the context of each individual is forever changing and cannot be viewed as constant:

> […] knowledge of the social reality and knowledge of oneself are, as Holzkamp (1973) emphasizes, "in certain ways, two sides of the same cognitive process, genuine societal knowledge always implies self-knowledge and vice versa" (p. 369). Without a notion of this fundamental unity, we can neither realize the inhumanity of conditions where this unity is torn apart nor ask about the subjective meaning this distortion has, that is, grasp the one-sided and biased nature of ruling concepts that depict human subjectivity as an "encapsulated entity" without conscious influence on societal development, or even any desire for it (cf. Holzkamp, 1983, p. 539)
>
> (Osterkamp, 2009, p. 168f)

In a recent interview with Ole Dreier, a Danish psychologist from Copenhagen University, he outlines how Critical Psychology has changed over the years since Holzkamp's work and how it can be understood in today's context (Viuf, 2016). He emphasizes that in today's world, everyday life is far more complex in respect to how people should adjust to the different areas they appear in: work, home, their spare time, and so on. It is here that psychology must help people achieve a more coherent and persistent life (Viuf, 2016). The role of Critical Psychology is to continually challenge the ideas put forth by the scientific community and adjust its empirical foundation and utilization for all people (Dreier, 1979; Viuf, 2016). Due to the adolescence of psychology as a science, much is yet to be determined, and it is improbable, however achievable, to set anything in stone as a fundamental theory if a field bears such a responsibility. Dreier stresses that such a young science must constantly reconsider its

position and its empirical foundation, set in the context of the present (Viuf, 2016, p. 41).

As a practical science, Dreier says that psychology has to adopt methods to the context of each individual and their problems. Practitioners experience unique problems every day in, for instance, clinical psychology, and each problem is unique in their setting, context and personal view. Instead of designing universal methods for resolving psychological problems, we have to work towards collecting knowledge in everyday psychology by finding methods that will resolve issues permanently so we do not experience relapses and futile interventions (Viuf, 2016, p. 41).

4.2. Social Representations Theory

Émile Durkheim, the French sociologist, sought to understand how groups of people acquire knowledge, communicate and retain rationality through his theory of collective representations. One of the founders of sociology developed the theory as a reaction to a more secularized world; how do people make meaning of their world, when communities less adhere to a religion? The communal symbols and values that instead gave meaning to groups of people were then called collective representations by Durkheim (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 117f). This eventually inspired Moscovici to take it a step further and make sense of how individuals make meaning through their everyday lives, acquire knowledge, maintain it and communicate it to others with either similar or dissimilar framework. Moscovici upholds that great sources of inspiration were found in the works of Lev Vygotsky, Emile Durkheim and Jean Piaget (Moscovici, 2000, p. 137). Moscovici defines social representations as of such:

> [...] a system of values, ideas and practices which a twofold function: first, to
> establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their
> material and social world and to master it; and secondly to enable communication
> to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code
> for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the
> various aspects of their world and their individual and group history.
>
> (Moscovici, 1976, p. xiii In Wagner et al., 1999, p. 96)

The prevailing idea at the time was that lay thinking was a lower form of knowledge compared to the scientific world of language and thinking, however, as Moscovici and Jovchelovitch argue, it is indeed not.

> Within psychology, but not only in psychology, there is a strong tendency to
> consider lay knowledge and everyday understandings as obstacles, noise, and
> errors to be removed: the superstitions, mythologies and false beliefs they carry
> should be replaced with the truth of expert or scientific knowledge.
>
> (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p. 437)

Instead, it is a way to make sense of the world around us (Flick & Foster, 2008). Furthermore, it should not be seen, as previously dubbed, a lower form of knowledge or thinking. The argument by Moscovici is not only that the continuity between levels of thinking is essential for making meaning in our world, but also that there is no hierarchical importance between scientific knowledge and common sense (Moscovici, 1973 In Flick & Foster, 2008). There is indeed a difference in how the different types of knowledge are obtained, where it can be maintained and its overall nature of existence. Expert knowledge prompts specific ways of interpreting immediate surroundings and context, which is crucial in many areas of our everyday lives (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 27f).

4.2.1. Common sense & cognitive polyphasia

> […] Moscovici pointed out that all the key issues of our thinking tradition in one guise or another collapse into two major and inter-related themes: the first is the opposition between philosophy (as high thinking) and common sense (as low thinking), the second is the struggle between the vanguard/elite and the masses/crowd. (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p. 433)

It is with this quote from Sandra Jovchelovitch' paper that theory of social representations seems critical in the process of understanding how there are different ways of thinking and making decisions within our society and the people who live in it. First, we have to consider how the lay differs from the vanguard/elite since it can be understood that the lay (common people) make sense of their surroundings and make meaning in their lives using common sense. It is a kind of knowledge that is ever-present in the society in which people live. Common sense and the connotation of this word suggests that the way of thinking is "normal", which is the meaning, e.g., Kahneman (2011) uses. However, it more likely refers to the sensibility of everyday people within social psychology as interpreted by Moscovici and the theory of social representations (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p. 434). For decades, it has been seen as a lower form of knowledge (Marková, 2017, p. 364). Moscovici and the succeeding inspired authors in theory of social representations instead saw the continuity between common sense and scientific language as an essential method to make meaning of people's everyday lives (Flick & Foster, 2008, p. 203f). Henceforth, an important understanding of social representations and common sense is:

> [...] the realization that common sense knowledges do not go away for the simple reason that they are functional to human life responding to problems and needs that science does not, and indeed cannot, respond to.
>
> (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p. 440)

In theory of social representations, the concept of cognitive polyphasia refers to several representations being present without conflict (Wagner & Hayes, 2005,

p. 232f). This recognition is epitomical to the understanding and view on how we make meaning in our everyday lives; being able to adjust to contexts, diverge from one path of understanding into another, while not experiencing a sort of cognitive dissonance (Jovchelovitch, 2008). Cognitive polyphasia has henceforth become a meaningful concept in the interpretation of how continuity between common sense and scientific knowledge (expert knowledge) can coexist and supplement each other.

> There is no need of creating a sharp divide between the worlds of science and common sense, nor of trying to see them exactly alike. [...] What unites them is a continuation in knowledge, the remarkable plasticity which humans display in processes of knowledge construction, a knowledge continuum that does not erase one knowledge with another but is polyphasic and combines both cognition and emotion, abstract thinking and action, philosophy and pragmatics, science and common sense. (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p. 445f)

As the concept of cognitive polyphasia is being described by Jovchelovitch, we can extend this knowledge to the fact that each can become an expert in one context and use common sense in another social arena (Tateo, 2014, p. 77; Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 28). This idea will be continued to the general theoretical discussion as well (6.0.).

4.2.2. Symbolic coping: anchoring and objectification

At the very core of the theory of social representations, the idea is to make sense of our surroundings, especially within the group. Interestingly, anchoring and objectification can be used as a "symbolic coping mechanism" to make the unfamiliar familiar, which is the general purpose of anchoring and objectification (Wagner et al., 1999). When an individual, part of a group, or the entire group is unsuccessful in interpreting their surroundings, they must compare it to something which is already known to them. This adaptation can be achieved by using already existing ideas as a foundation for an interpretation of something new and unfamiliar (Flick & Foster, 2008, p. 197). It can be hard to find a perfect fit for an unknown representation with something that is already known, which is

why social representations can sometimes become almost ambiguous or *fuzzy* (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 206). Even so, Moscovici avoids using the labels "categorical error" or "bias", since the social knowledge is unavoidably non-neutral and one interpretation is another's social representation. Attempting to make meaning of new situations by using existing anchors means it is up for people to adapt to the situation, rather than being subjugated or reduced to a product of bias (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, pp. 204-208). Anchoring an unknown phenomenon to an existing anchor or objectifying an abstract idea into something also concrete is at the core of making meaning in our everyday lives (Jovchelovitch, 2008).

4.2.3. Practical applications

With the theoretical assumptions presented thus far, here is an approach to how social representations theory can be applied in this particular paper with a focus on political psychology:

> Propaganda tries to transform ideology into culture, make it a part of common sense (Moscovici, 1961/1976; Moscovici and Marková, 1998). When living in a particular social, cultural and political system, people unreflectively adopt ideas and ways of thinking which are implicitly imposed upon them by that system. Even if they disagree and oppose that system at a conscious level, the system creates and defines their social reality and pervades daily language. Representations are expressed through language and, at the same time, language itself is an object of social representations. It was the interdependence between language and social representations that was explored [...].
> (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 330)

As described beforehand, the actual application of social representations can be tricky as a result of all the societal, cultural and even personal factors that are sometimes operating simultaneously. If we instead employ the theoretical knowledge concerning social representations in an attempt to understand, how people make meaning in their everyday lives, we can inspect the empirical material in light of this. As illustrated in the citation above, people can

unreflectively adopt ideas which are **implicitly imposed** upon them. A way of avoiding being drawn away from reason or rationality in statements is through *content-rationality* (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, pp. 102ff). When we do not think critically about statements that can appear *stupid* to us, we can resort to irrationality, according to Wagner & Hayes (2005, p. 103f). This point will prove very useful when reviewing the political speeches following in the paper (chapter 5.0.). Furthermore, the theoretical assumptions will not be recognized as a final answer — it will help us grant insight into just how meaning is composed under the circumstances.

4.3. Daniel Kahneman

If we are to talk about decision-making and judgment under influence, we cannot disregard the works of Daniel Kahneman and his partner Amos Tversky. Kahneman himself mentioned that the partnership between these two was indeed a perfect example of two ways of thinking: Kahneman being the intuitive and emotional actor; Tversky being the contemplating actor. The two brought to light how intuition plays a part in making decisions during everyday life and in complex scenarios. Whether it is walking down the street and observing people around you, or it is trying to understand integrals in math. During the decades Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky have been researching, they focused mainly on decision-making, the ways to assess probability and what they call "intuitive statisticians" (Kahneman, 2011, p. 8f). Throughout the years of working with these concepts, an apparent duality occurred; a "higher" form of thinking, where expertise and education plays a necessary role, and a "lower" form of thinking, which has its flow through intuition, emotions and gut feelings. The terms "higher" and "lower" are only for labels and serve no connotational value since fast thinking is also influenced by expertise (Kahneman, 2011, p. 15). An expert can have a gut feeling or make intuitive decisions just as well as others.

Social scientists in the 1970s broadly accepted two ideas about human nature.
First, people are generally rational, and their thinking is normally sound. Second,
emotions such as fear, affection, and hatred explain most of the occasions on
which people depart from rationality.

(Kahneman, 2011, p. 11f)

Kahneman and Tversky's papers from 1976 and 1979 eventually became landmarks in a way to understand how people make everyday decisions rather than optimum or effective decisions. Prospect Theory is precisely this — trying to explain how people value risk and positive gains in decision-making. The focus of this paper is not risk management, but it is essential to understand that a lot of the work behind Kahneman's theories come from the interest in decision-making under risk or uncertainty.

4.3.1. The two systems

The concepts of system 1 and system 2 originated from Keith Stanovich and Richard West. Both systems represent two different ways of thinking and making decisions; not two separate physical parts of the brain (Kahneman, 2011, pp. 18-24). The decisions made by system 1 are often implicit, and they are often unnoticed by the person who makes them. However, even though the decisions through system 1 are made actively by someone, they work almost the same way perception does as illustrated in figure 1 below.
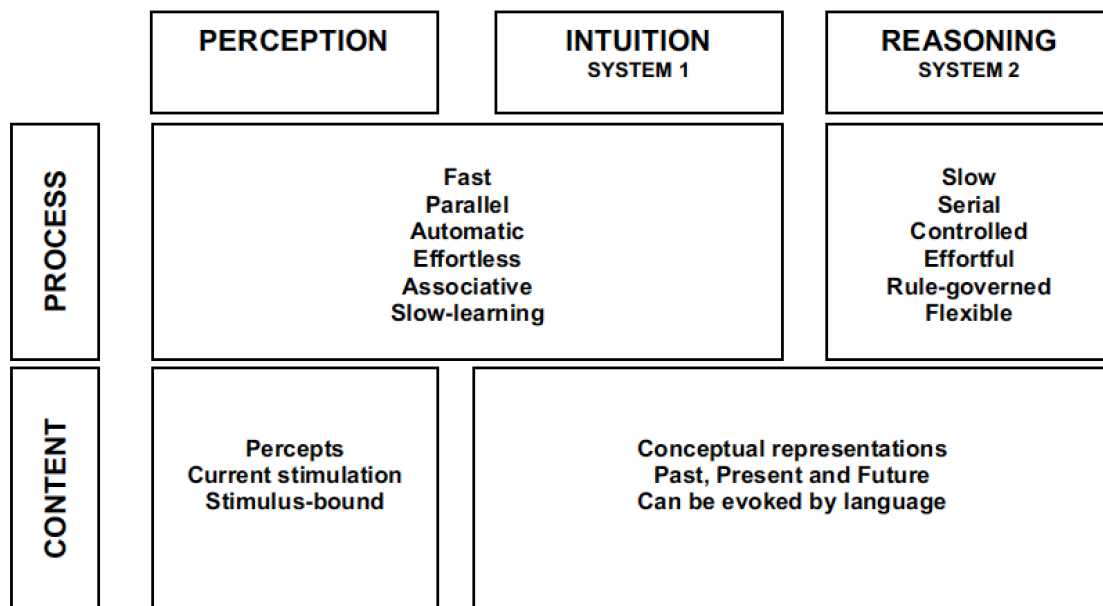
We are influenced by stimuli and use quick intuition to make decisions. System 2 works almost the exact opposite way. The reasoning of system 2 is serial and controlled, which is why, whenever flaws in decision making or judgment happen, they happen in system 2. This is due to the nature of system 1 and how efficiently it makes decisions; some factors are overlooked, because of heuristics creating biases in system 1, which floats into system 2 (Kahneman, 2002 p. 450f; 2011, p. 17ff). Below, a few features of system 1 and system 2 are exemplified in order of complexity to give an idea of what it entails. First system 1:

Detect that one object is more distant than another.

Orient to the source of a sudden sound.

Complete the phrase "bread and…"

[…]

Understand simple sentences.

Recognize that a "meek and tidy soul with a passion for detail" resembles an occupational stereotype.

(Kahneman, 2011, p. 18)

Here are some examples of tasks, where system 2 is put to use:

Brace for the starter gun in a race.

Focus attention on the clowns in the circus.

Focus on the voice of a particular person in a crowded and noisy room.

[…]

Park in a narrow space (for most people except garage attendants).

Compare two washing machines for overall value.

Fill out a tax form.

(Kahneman, 2011, p. 19f)

A great example often used by Kahneman to illustrate how both systems work together is referred to as "the bat and ball problem". It also illustrates how the answer is not double-checked as soon as system 1 has made the decision.

"A bat and ball cost $1.10. The bat costs one dollar more than the ball. How

much does the ball cost?" (Kahneman, 2002, pp. 451-452).

The intuitive answer from most students, who answered this question, was wrong. Around 80% of the total response rate got the question wrong when they intuitively answered 10 cents (the correct answer is 5 cents: 0.5 + 1.05) (Kahneman, 2002). An explanation to this could also be that system 2 requires much energy. Kahneman (2011, p. 35f) mentions a study in which participants reacted to system 2 decision differently after having ingested glucose. The aforementioned "decision-making fatigue" could help explain why some of these wrongful decisions were made. Perhaps the decision-making process was depleted, thus triggering the more efficient system 1.

Having given practical examples how system 1 and system 2 work, we cannot disregard the biases and concepts that help explain why the systems work as they do. In the next chapter, it will be illustrated how other concepts used by Kahneman, such as availability, fluency, and salience, work.

4.3.2. Availability, fluency, vividness & salience

Availability and *availability heuristics* are concepts for how readily information is available. The more salient the information is, the more vivid it also becomes, making it much more available and thus increases the likelihood of availability bias (Kahneman, 2011, p. 268). Salience has to do with how easy something is to understand, where vividness is a concept that encapsulates how vivid the mental imagery of an event is depicted in mind. The vividness of events and information can also be obtained by using detailed descriptions, and emotional words. A way, in which system 2 can avoid becoming the victim of availability biases by vividness, fluency, and salience, is through expertise.

Fluency is the degree of cognitive ease. Cognitive ease is described as a concept of how smooth and seamless a cognitive process is (Hertwig et al., 2008, pp. 1192-1194). If system 2 is overloaded due to the difficulty or lack of fluency, system 1 takes over and makes the decision (Kahneman, 2011, p. 131).

Strong emotions such as fear are a catalyst for system 1 responsiveness or reactions, which Sunstein (2004, p. 971) also argues for, in his work on probability neglect — heavily inspired by Kahneman & Tversky's works, as well. He mentions, how availability heuristics and intense emotions, in general, can create wrong judgment of probability, often explained by the vividness of events either through description or depiction (Sunstein, 2004, p. 970f).

4.3.3. Expertise

Kahneman (2011) stresses that real expertise is hard to achieve and requires much training. He uses the metaphor of learning an alphabet to explain how one can gain expert knowledge (Kahneman, 2011, p. 231). There is some evidence to suggest that through repetition and perseverance genuine expertise can be achieved. Understanding that emotions, vividness, availability, and anchoring are factors that increase the cognitive ease with which something is

learned, will grant access to faster and more fluent system 2 adaptations of knowledge through system 1 (Kahneman, 2002). To date, studies investigating expertise have produced equivocal results — Kahneman is cautious and slightly skeptic about true expertise being obtainable (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Instead, Kahneman argues for a more informed system 1, which makes decisions based on information that is more available. He refers to and endorses Simon's (1992) concept of expert intuition:

> "The situation has provided a
> cue: This cue has given the expert access to information
> stored in memory, and the information provides the answer.
> Intuition is nothing more and nothing less than recognition"
> (Simon, 1992, p. 155 In Kahneman & Klein, 2009, p. 520).

System 1, in this instance, becomes a delivery system of information stored in memory or system 2. When we are faced with difficult questions, we often resort to our intuition (Kahneman, 2011). In a situation like that, the expert knowledge is set aside and what Kahneman calls the *intuitive heuristics* take over — this again causes inconsistency and irregularities in human decision-making. As is stated by Kahneman & Tversky (1976) many times over, it is nearly impossible to use models to explain decision-making or human behavior in general since most of it works through system 1 or intuition which causes unpredictable behavior. In the following quotation, Kahneman exemplifies how a chief investment officer in a financial firm used system 1 for a decision which should have called for deeper analytical and rational thinking:

> The question that the executive faced (should I invest in Ford stock?) was
> difficult, but the answer to an easier and related question (do I like Ford cars?)
> came readily to his mind and determined his choice. This is the essence of intuitive
> heuristics: when faced with a difficult question, we often answer an easier one
> instead, usually without noticing the substitution.
> (Kahneman, 2011, p. 14)

Kahneman again calls our attention to the difficulties achieving true expertise (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Two conditions must be extant: First, the environment must be predictable and stable without unjustifiable occurrences. Second, the environment must call for an expert and have a steady framework for the expert to practice and gain new knowledge. For instance, expertise in Western medicine cannot be achieved in a remote jungle. If the environment is not stable and predictable, *self-fulfilling prophecies* can occur, where an expert becomes overly confident and bases decisions on information that does not derive from expertise, but instead random events (Kahneman & Klein, 2009, p. 520).

4.3.4. Priming

Priming is the association of ideas (Kahneman, 2011, p. 52f). A particular way of thinking can be primed by the use of words or phrases as well. Kahneman explains how if participants in a study were asked to say what word SO_P is, they responded differently depending on which word they had heard in advance. If they had heard WASH, they often would reply with SOAP. If they had heard EAT, they would reply with SOUP. This is how the effect of priming works. Even though aforementioned seems like a simple experiment, Kahneman explains how it can also affect behavior. In a study by psychologist John Bargh, students were manipulated to walk slower after being influenced by the effects of priming (Kahneman, 2011, p. 53). This was dubbed the Florida Effect and works in two stages: First, the participants were exposed to words that had associations with old people such as *"Florida"*, *"gray"*, *"bald"* and *"forgetful"*. The word "old" was never mentioned. Second, they had to walk through a corridor. The students exposed to the Florida words walked significantly slower than those who were not (Kahneman, 2011, p. 53f). This is how priming can work as well; making listeners alter behavior or be influenced to act differently.

A key point in Kahneman's theory is that fast, intuitive thinking is often far superior to slow cognitive analysis; however, the context is always to be considered. In a fast-paced world full of information and sporadic data streams, we need to know when to make use of our slow way of thinking. Knowing when to take a step back in a political context where there are numerous factors to consider, is crucial if we are to avoid bias (Levy, 2002).

In the next section, the focus of the study will shift to an analysis of selected content relevant to the theoretical concepts described thus far. The analysis will lead to a theoretical discussion and reflection about the themes and topics of the content.

5.0. Theoretical Thematic Analysis

This chapter of the paper is divided into two parts. First, I want to review the video of [3] to find themes and categorization of data that might help us arrive at an understanding of the research questions. So far, Kahneman's theories on decision-making and the theory of social representations have been reviewed and accounted for. These will be influencing the choice of themes, however not to the extent that the essential themes of the content will be ignored or disregarded. The content was chosen due to the questions they raised — what does this mean, how can we make sense of this way of thinking and how can we make meaning of it? After having been familiarized with the content, which is the first step in creating themes, as Braun & Clarke (2006) argue for, the main observations will be accumulated into themes that are meaningful for the content. One of the central categories, which theory of social representations calls for, is how people make meaning in their lives. Another is the distinction of expert knowledge or expertise and what it entails.

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[3] Aired on Danish television in 2013 on Channel 5 and is accessible through https://www.dplay.dk

5.1. Ghost Hunters

In this section, the focus will be on the video of Danish ghost hunters. There is a particular style to this kind of televised program. The point of this analysis is not to step on anyone's toes about believing whether or not ghosts exist, but this analysis will assume that they do not exist. It also remains unclear if this is a parody. However, the organizations who participate in this programme do in fact exist and remain highly active to this day. The video is in Danish, and as a native Danish speaker, I will do my best to translate into English without intentionally influencing the tone or connotation of the language used in the content. I will focus on the features of the video, how language is used, for what purpose and which concepts it brings up. The categories will then be applied to the second object (5.2.) to see if there is an argument for comparison.

The materials analyzed have small elements that cannot fall into a specific theme or category but will eventually be picked up in the following discussion. The purpose of this is to thematically organize observations without creating a clutter of sporadic information in the analysis.

The episode of Ghost Hunters aired in 2013, was produced by Scandinavian Broadcasting System (SBS) and is 44 minutes in length. The references to the episode will be given as "(minutes:seconds)", for instance: (1:23) refers to 1 minute and 23 seconds into the clip.

5.1.1. Features of Ghost Hunters

5.1.1.1. Style

The particular style of this episode can be viewed as a documentary, but not in its entirety. There are satirical elements used in the episode as well, which creates some uncertainty to its precise aim concerning the style of media. A female narrator or speaker is used sparingly between scenes to either recapture what happened earlier in the episode or to explain what is currently happening on the screen; for instance at the beginning of the episode to explain who the two organizations are (Ghosthunting.dk(GHDK) and DPA (Danish Parapsychological Aspect)). Throughout the episode, the music used is either comical (30:20) or scary (23:50). We are introduced to the families of the owners of the two organizations, what they eat, how they happened to believe in ghosts (7:20), and factual references to when they have seen them. There is, however, no evidence of actual sightings in the video. Interviews with the main participants of the show also contribute to the feeling of a documentary — these interviews happen throughout the entire episode. Overall, the show is highly edited, using graphic effects to create confusion through color manipulation and flash of bright lights as illustrated in the image below.

An almost misleading style is created, when it comes to every ghost hunt and attempt to capture evidence of the paranormal activity. The previously mentioned sound effects that are enhanced to mask what the participants hear (15:25 & 33:59) overwhelm any evidence of auditory paranormal activity. Comparing this TV show to other kinds of "reality TV", one can see a similarity, even if the objective is to appear like a documentary. This style will be elaborated further in the later discussion.

5.1.2. Themes in Ghost Hunters

The themes are chosen on the basis of the theoretical perspectives. An essential part of both the theory of social representations and the research in decision-making is the role and position of expert knowledge or expertise.

5.1.2.1. Use of "expert" knowledge
Every once in a while the leader of DPA is interviewed and provides the viewer with "ghost facts". In these short clips, the interviewee displays expert knowledge of facts that the viewer cannot possibly have access to unless they are ghost hunters themselves. It is not common sense knowledge (Jovchelovitch, 2008). The ghost facts are presented at 2:40, 17:10, 19:50,

23:05 and 35:00. During these short interviews, the leader explains how some ghosts may not have accepted their destiny and this way they stick around and lack the knowledge that the leader has: "They can, in fact, pass through walls — they do not need to open doors" (23:05). We, as viewers, cannot possibly know where this information comes from. Theoretically, because he is speaking in a different framework, and from a different field in which he has specific knowledge (Wagner & Hayes, 2005) — and literally because he does not explain where the information comes from. We have to trust his expert opinion (Kahneman & Klein, 2009, p. 524). It is also being explained that ghosts and their energy is easily stored in materials such as limestone and granite, which is why they tend to move towards the rooms with granite and limestone walls. Here, he displays a more particular and scientifically measurable knowledge (Jovchelovitch, 2008). The interviewee seems confident in his statements and explains these facts as if they are definite and undeniable. He continues to explain that some of his equipment can detect paranormal energy (7:00). Moreover, "ghosts are never white", the leader of DPA stresses to the viewer (2:40). Using common sense, we know that ghosts are not real. As explained earlier regarding common sense, the knowledge is that which is available to the public — this kind of knowledge is exemplified as being expert, first and foremost due to its niche area, and second, because it is, as we know, unreal (Jovchelovitch, 2008 ; Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 103f).

At mark 31:27, the speaker explains how infrared cameras work, and why the use of these is essential to the acquisition of footage of paranormal activity. Here, the show uses scientific knowledge to explain, how the infrared cameras work. Danish Parapsychological Aspect takes pride in their equipment (11:40) and spends much time showing how it needs to be set up correctly (32:10). By breaking it down into simple and easy steps, system 1 experiences this as having a higher form of validity, thus it can be accepted easier (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). One of the cameras are not working, but they use an expert in its place instead (31:44). The expert is called Hannibal, who claims to be born with clairvoyant psychic abilities and can feel the energy of ghosts — what the

ghosts do and what they say (27:30-30:50). Once again, we, who do not know the matter, will have everything explained to us by the expert. He has access to areas of information we cannot comprehend due to his experience in the field (Jovchelovitch, 2008). It could also be argued here that Hannibal is suffering from *self-fulfilling prophecy* (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Having been in the field since an early age (27:38), without a sense of consistency or validity in the field, Hannibal could have experienced a boosted confidence, causing his views and ways of thinking to validate themselves automatically. Hannibal has a specific conspicuously flamboyant appearance (32:10). However, the leader of DPA claims he is the best expert in Denmark (30:40).

One thing that seems recurrent in the array of DPA and GHDK is how they all display a certain savoir-faire; knowing what to do and how to do it, consistently, while having an explanation for the most obscure and paranormal events. Another individual of high stature is the night guard at DPA's ghost hunt location at *Fredensborg Castle* in Denmark (16:44). The narrator introduces him as a former military man with the rank of Captain. It is, however, unknown whether it is in the Home Guard or the Danish Defence. Either way, it is a rank of stature and authority. He also displays an expert knowledge about ghosts, since he explains how King Christian the 7th was diagnosed with schizophrenia and there is a chance it could be him haunting the castle. Authority is a recurring issue for the leader of GHDK. The reason, why it is of utmost importance that he stays in charge of the organization, is that: "If there are any disagreements of any kind, I can decide and take charge" (8:30). This statement in itself is an example of how he knows better in any scenario or dispute that might arise in the organization. This position could eventually result in yet another example of a *self-fulfilling prophecy* if there is no one to argue with him (Kahneman & Klein, 2009, p. 520).

There are many examples of how expertise and expert knowledge are displayed vastly in this episode. One crucial distinction Kahneman (2002) would make here, is how expertise cannot be achieved in a field like this; the

unpredictable nature of events and the overall validity of the field is questionable. However, each member of DPA and GHDK are self-proclaimed experts in ghost hunting, which might intensify their experience of meaning/ purpose (Wagner et al., 1999) or efficacy as an expert (Kahneman, 2011).

5.1.2.2. Making logical conclusions or assumptions

One of the major themes or ways of categorizing this content is how the participants and interviewees make assumptions. The focus of this theme is critical to dismantling all the information and statements that are being presented in Ghost Hunters. Remembering that fluency of information increases cognitive ease, thus promotes system 1 activation, reminds us that this system is much less rational than system 2 (Kahneman, 2011).

The participants often make statements as if they were clear, logical conclusions, where the reason is "that's just how it is" or "that's what I believe". As exemplified in the previous themes on how expert knowledge is used, the idea can be taken further. Having built the assumption that they have knowledge about ghost hunting, which others do not, they can take certain aspects of the field for granted, in their attempt to explain their goings-on. Some of the expert knowledge they could become common sense to them (Wagner & Hayes, 2005; Jovchelovitch, 2008), which could explain a statement like "ghosts aren't always white" (2:40). It should probably require an explanation as to, first of all, why, and seconds of all: How does he possess this knowledge? This slowly leads us to another recurrent theme, which is how they use emotion and when they use reason and how it is displayed. Before moving on to that in the next chapter, here is another example of how assumptions or unverified facts are taken for granted: The leader of GHDK says, the reason, why he believes in ghosts is because he saw his deceased mom driving a car in an oncoming lane. After he stopped the car and turned around, the car was gone (10:20). His instant explanation was that he had seen a ghost. If he is a victim of decision-making fatigue (Kahneman, 2011), system 1 would have placed this event as

more plausible than it was. We can also speculate at his emotional state after the loss of a parent.

In the castle, DPA is examining a "ghost dog". The night guard says he once saw a dog running across the room and jump into the wall. Instantly, the camera cuts to an interview with the leader from DPA, wherein he begins analyzing the event as if it undoubtedly occurred (21:50). If the night guard is speaking in a language that is common sense for the investigators from DPA, it might appear obvious that there was a ghost dog. The frame of reference and language of both the DPA leader and the night guard puts them in a social setting in which they can reach an increased understanding through meaning-making (Wagner & Hayes, 2005). Again, when the night guard claims to have experienced a locked door being opened by itself, the leader from DPA explains that because ghosts sometimes haven't come to terms with their demise, they do not know they can walk through walls, and that is just how it is (23:05). The guard explains that the doors are quite technical and hard to open. So it should be impossible, and the instant reaction from DPS is that it has to be paranormal (22:25). These assumptions without explanation or reason are often made throughout the episode. The majority of them could be explained by the fact that almost every person in this video believe that ghosts are real, thus sharing a common language (Jovchelovitch, 2008) or an understanding of the paranormal activity.

5.1.2.3. Emotion or reason

The show demonstrates situations where emotions are influenced as well. They often speak of fear, because something is scary (5:40), which the sound editing and visual editing enhanced with the screechy or shrill sounds (6:00). As Kahneman (2011) and Sunstein (2004) points out, strong visceral emotions such as fear can trigger system 1 thinking, because it is much more important to act intuitively, when in danger or experiencing fear of something. The word "feel" is also often used as a reference to either gut feeling (27:50) or an actual belief (2:01). The leader from DPA says: "I know the ghosts exist, I just have this

feeling" (3:25). This feeling is, of course, a kind of belief which the participant holds, which also comes to show in their explanations of why they believe in ghosts after having seen dead relatives (10:20;10:40). The night guard at the castle initially contacted DPA because his staff of guards all experienced fear or being terrified of moving around the castle at night (17:44). Concerning reason or using common sense, the leader from GHDK says that the two new members on trial are not fit to be ghost hunters, because they "lack common sense" when investigating paranormal activity (24:45). He moves on saying that they lack it because they did not investigate the noises that the leader was making, to scare them on purpose (25:00). DPA members at the castle tell us how they are afraid to sit in the darkness and make nighttime observations. They feel the adrenaline pumping because they do not know what might happen — they think it is exciting (33:55).

One crucial point in the analysis of this theme is how strong emotions can trigger judgment bias (Kahneman & Tversky, 1974; Kahneman, 2002; Sunstein, 2004). If the surroundings are dark, they are faced with unknown subjects or scary scenarios; our perception may be subject to bias or fear-influenced judgments. There are no examples in this episode, where the participants question the existence of ghosts or their profession. Such questions could prompt system 2 judgments (Kahneman, 2002). Instead, everyone agrees with each other, and thus fluency is increased.

5.1.2.4. Making the unfamiliar familiar

Working with the theory of social representations, it seems almost self-evident to use the theoretical foundation of meaning-making in the analysis of this paper. The ghost hunters use many metaphors to explain to the viewers that, which is apparent to them but might not be explicable. One example of this is how Hannibal, the ghost expert, explains, how he can hear ghosts. "It's like a good friend telling me something into the ear. It is almost like a radio — I have to tune in to a specific frequency so I can feel and hear the paranormal energy" (30:20). Using public sense information of radios' functionality, he

exemplifies something unfamiliar such as "paranormal activity" and makes it available for the viewer using anchoring (Wagner et al., 1999).

The leader of DPA tells us that "any ghost hunter with a shred of self-respect has proper research material", and then shows the viewers movies like Ghostbusters, Poltergeist 1, 2 and 3 and Paranormal Activity. All movies that, according to him, grant insight to the world of ghost hunting. This is a way to prepare himself for any unfamiliar activity, so he will have an idea what is going on (6:30). If he or any of the viewers do not know what paranormal activity or ghost hunting is, he demonstrates how that understanding can be achieved — both for himself and us. The members of both DPA and GHDK seem to have commonly used concepts for the act of hunting ghosts, using terms such as "orbs" (35:00). Orbs immediately prove paranormal activity. The use of these words tells us that the ghost hunters have a common language of concepts of which they have knowledge and insight (Wagner & Hayes, 2005; Jovchelovitch, 2008). We can ourselves refer to the meaning of an orb (a round object), but its meaning is only apparent to those who chase ghosts, as they state in the video.

Now, the focus of the analysis shifts to the content from the Danish politician Mette Thiesen from *Nye Borgerlige* political party. In this analysis, the target will be drawing upon the thematic elements that are recurrent throughout the video. This is intentional as per the methodological approach of theoretical content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to see if there is any consistency in the material or content. The analysis and following theoretical, analytical discussion will illustrate if there are similarities of dissimilarities between the two kinds of content. One of the reasons for choosing this politician, in particular, is because after watching her speech, we can see many assumptions being made as well. Furthermore, self-evident facts are taken for granted just like in Ghost Hunters. The coupling of these two media might appear odd at first, however, in the next section, hopefully, the connection between them will become clear, or perhaps the similarities are nonexistent, and the continuity of themes are unlikely.

5.2. Nye Borgerlige: Political Propaganda

Mette Thiesen
Spidskandidat til folketingsvalget for Nye Borgerlige i Nordsjælland

The content from politician Mette Thiesen from Nye Borgerlige (a liberal party in Denmark) is accessible on her official Facebook page. The Facebook posts are acquired over April 2018. She does, however, remain highly active and releases daily Facebook posts and weekly videos. These videos have been transcribed since it is a different type of video compared to the previous one with Ghost Hunters. In this video, there are no visual effects or auditive edits. There are no cutting of scenes or multiple people speaking at the same time. It is one person looking into the camera and speaking. The way I will refer to this is by using number codes, referring to different sections of her accumulated speech. This means that "(l. 2)" or "line 2" will refer to line number 2 in appendix 1.

5.2.1. Features of Nye Borgerlige: Mette Thiesen

5.2.1.1. Style

The style of the political propaganda spoken by Thiesen is characterized by a simple video conveying a message by herself. It comes in its most simple form of her using hand gestures as one would when speaking to another person. Occasionally, some images of events she refers to are shown on the screen,

but they act as reminders only. The purpose of defining the style of this video is to argue for the transcription of each video being examined in this analysis. She is situated in relevant locations to her topic of speech and presents her describes her location to the viewer.

5.2.2. Themes of Nye Borgerlige: Mette Thiesen

The same arguments will be made for the use of these themes; however, a contextualization is required. Since this is a political context, we must assume that the politician is going to explain herself, attempt to convince the viewer or argument for her political views. In doing so, understanding which kind of thinking or knowledge is displayed is necessary to understand the intent and content. Again, her use of emotional language or references, use of common sense or scientific knowledge (Jovchelovitch, 2008) will persuade the viewer in different ways and trigger different systems of thinking (Kahneman, 2011). At this point, we can only conjecture at the outcome. Since the material has a political nature, this section will include an additional theme revolving *imposing ideas* by the use of language, since the theory of social representations suggests that propaganda can transform ideology into the culture and make it part of common sense through language (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 330). Furthermore, priming through the association of words will help illuminate which associations can be made (Kahneman, 2011, p. 53f).

An overall theme in all five videos is how Islam should have no influence in Denmark. She uses real-life examples and argues for their importance on her overall goal as a politician. Her goal is to decrease the number of immigrants with Middle-Eastern heritage and Islamic influence, which she states in every last sentence of each video (l. 12, 25, 47, 58 & 67).

5.2.2.1. Use of "expert" knowledge
First of all, the field of politics, the base of knowledge is everything we know. Said in other words, it is the government of people and the world we live in.

Politics as an overall topic should not be scientific knowledge unless it is specific to either the economic policies, specificity regarding ideologies or other specialized areas of government. Thiesen's knowledge about the topics she refers to are often exemplified as facts. This theme is widely less apparent in these videos. As Wagner & Hayes (2005, p. 330) stresses, propaganda can transform ideology into culture into common sense. The way Thiesen argues her case in these videos is not through expert knowledge of political systems, but by referring to our culture and people's common sense (l. 21, 22, 23, 40, 57). In the previously mentioned lines, she makes political statements grounded in the goal of her political party, but with little or no reference to expert knowledge. Statements such as "we need a full asylum stop" and "we will secure that criminal foreigners are deported after one crime" specifies her ideological principles, however, they are rooted in the fact that Thiesen could see people were sending text messages on their phones from their balconies (l. 15-16). She has knowledge that the viewer does not, such as the fact that Denmark is out of control because foreigners are sending text messages in my immediate vicinity. She fails to explain the causal link between these two facts. The vividness of her explanations will also, according to Kahneman (2011), trigger system 1 thinking, and exclude the use of expert knowledge or system 2 thinking. Vivid explanations or references to visceral emotions (Kahneman, 2011; Sunstein, 2004) in line 4, 10, 17, 29, 40, 46, 64 is a way of her being able to trigger system 1 thinking by painting a picture of crime-stricken streets, a country about to be taken over or referring to violence by foreigners. As indicated previously, Thiesen's primary use of expert knowledge is to convert, relate or translate it into common sense (Jovchelovitch, 2008), making it part of our everyday lives concerning the framework of reference.

5.2.2.2. Making logical conclusions or assumptions

This theme is distinctly attached to the previous, as explained by her use of expert knowledge or scientific knowledge. The majority of Thiesen's assumptions are founded in "this is just how it is", since her arguments are either based on news reports (l. 61) where she interprets the underlying

meaning with assumptions — or they are made from personal experience (l. 41-43), assuming that social control is running out of control (l. 43) due to an experience when she attended the gymnasium (l. 41). She explains that she knew a girl on her school who had a Muslim boyfriend (we are not being told how she knew he was religious). The boyfriend was apparently driving behind her during her "graduation drive" with her classmates. This assumption lacks a few steps of explanations, however, without a critical eye, perhaps the viewer is not being made aware of this, as her explanation is swiftly presented and then ignored. Without any *content-rationality* (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 102), the statement is accepted, and she can move on with her argument. Furthermore, system 1 is heavily influenced by information wherein there is cognitive ease and fluency (Kahneman, 2011).

From another perspective, by referring to these events or logical conclusions as common sense (Jovchelovitch, 2008), she can impose these ideological prejudices upon the listeners (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 330) as self-explanatory, acting under a *self-fulfilling prophecy* (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Since the style of the content is interview without interviewer, there are no regulations to her behavior or counter-arguments to statements like these: "Mohammad, who attends this school (UCC) to become a pedagogue, commented on an article, saying that a Jewish person being struck in Germany a month ago, was not stuck hard enough. This is a clear example of two-tongued Muslims, who shows Islam's true nature under the surface, but fill us with lies on the outside (l. 60-64)." This statement leads her to the questions, whether or not we, as Danish citizens, would want this man raising our children. A very innate and visceral assumption is being made here, but without counterarguments, her environment can produce the *self-fulfilling prophecy*, where assumptions or rash decisions are contrived without further cognitive analysis (Kahneman & Klein, 2009).

5.2.2.3. Emotion or reason

A lot of Thiesen's display of emotional content comes through language. The paper will return to her use of language as an overall theme later on. However, her applications of words that induce risk (Kahneman, 2011) is widely spread. Her use of the Danish word "sikre", which means "to secure" is used instead of "to make sure" exemplifies how she implies risk in her descriptions of Islamic influence in Denmark (l. 13-25). The *intuitive statistician* (Kahneman, 2011) does not stand a chance to judge the dangers of Islamic dominance or apply system 2, because few references are made to critical thinking or *content-rationality* (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 102). System 1 handles intuitive decision, and in the instances where she explains circumstances of cocksure determination that refers to her belief system, the statements appear self-apparent and intuitive (Kahneman, 2011). Without *content-rationality* (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 102), the subject matter becomes common sense (Jovchelovitch, 2008) and to some expect emotional, because it is not part of rational contemplation; the fear she creates by appealing to reason through emotion affects rationality and critical thinking in political statements (Sunstein, 2004).

5.2.2.4. Making the unfamiliar familiar

When looking over the content provided by Thiesen, looking for examples of anchoring or creating concreteness from abstractness, it almost appears as if she is performing a reverse process. Rather than concretizing information or stories, she creates new concepts which are insofar not part of our everyday language. She refers to most Muslim residents in Denmark as "young people who speak in two tongues" (l. 36, 54, 63, 66). She combines this with actual anchoring (Wagner et al., 1999) or explanations to the viewer, where she keeps continuously preserves her non-scientific use of language and speaks in a way that is easy to understand (l. 1-67). After creating an alienating or stereotypical image of "these foreigners" (l. 16, 18, 28, 37, 51, 53, 54) using new concepts and distancing language, she simultaneously uses the word "we" twenty-two times in total. She clarifies our purpose as Danes and assumes our common

interest by that which seems obvious: decrease Islamic influence in Denmark. By drawing on common sense (Jovchelovitch, 2008), and referring to Danish values, our frame of reference remains to protect those values. Not once does she refer to any Muslim residents as Danes.

In the last theme, **we** will look at the language and the specifics of how Thiesen constructs meaning through the connotative value of words or phrases and common sense.

5.2.2.5. Language

Stereotyping foreigners (l. 1, 2, 18, 28, 30-32, 53) grants fluency to her statements (Kahneman, 2002) and in doing so, Thiesen can freely use expressive language. In line 1, she says that the board of members in a residential area, which has been classified as a ghetto, has been the victim of a *coup* back in 2015 and none of the currently responsible politicians have done anything about it. If we disregard our angst of overthrowing governments by force, which is the definition of a *coup*, we see her use of language as a media for expressing her values (Wagner & Hayes, 2005). When she speaks, she speaks of our values within the culture and society we live. Here, she holds a power, which she can convey through language (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 330f).

As previously stated, Thiesen displays common sense through her language but conveys actual scientific knowledge through her argumentation and assumptions. In line 3, she explains that she has spoken with residents in a ghetto area, and these residents have experienced a sense of insecurity, grouping & forming of gangs and radicalization of the youth. Usually, the mechanisms of gang formations and radicalization are complex and would require an expert in either behavior or criminology to understand. Instead, Thiesen uses these concepts in the same sentence as "a sense of insecurity", claiming the authenticity of the statement through common sense (insecurity) (Jovchelovitch, 2008; Wagner & Hayes, 2005; Wagner et al., 1999). Her use of

these connotations can cause a framing effect through priming towards a certain association (Kahneman, 2011, 52). This kind of priming is not exclusive to the example in line 3. By speaking of "us" and "them", she also creates a distinction that the negatively charged words become attached to the foreigners and not the Danes. As mentioned earlier, the use of "those people" or "two-tongued" is practiced to refer to foreigners. In the same sense, she makes sure to use "Denmark" in the sentences, where she says "we" or "us" (l. 11, 12, 17, 18, 25, 44, 45, 47, 58, 66, 67). A systematic use of drawing on common sense (Jovchelovitch, 2008), priming (Kahneman, 2011) and propaganda (Wagner & Hayes, 2005) will ensure that with lack of *content-rationality* (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 102), her message becomes uncritically adopted into our way of making meaning of the concepts she uses and the issues she addresses.

After this theoretical content analysis the paper will discuss the findings and themes covered in this paper in the following chapter to expand the themes and develop an understanding of the significance of this content.

6.0. Discussion

This study set out to examine under which conditions critical thinking occurs and how it can be interpreted by the applied theoretical and epistemological perspectives: Critical Psychology, the theory of social representations, cognitive psychology and theories by Daniel Kahneman. A recurrent perspective in work with these theories is the role of psychology in today's world. In this discussion, I review how we can interpret the empirical findings in psychology and apply it to a further and more precise understanding of how psychology's function as a field of study today. Furthermore, having worked with different kinds of media, I intend to review the implications different media have today and which ramifications they bring with them. Availability heuristics are reinforced by the media and cascades of availability (Kahneman, 2011), so this perspective is impending. Subjects such as political propaganda and types of knowledge and thinking will be discussed as well, as they appear critical to this project, and any further study of this topic. Last, but not least, I review the methodology practiced in this paper and suggest other ways of obtaining supplementary results.

6.1. Critical Psychology anno 2018

Critical Psychology aims to help us understand our surroundings and ask the appropriate questions to achieve this purpose.

> [...] grasp the one-sided and biased nature of ruling concepts that depict human subjectivity as an "encapsulated entity" without conscious influence on societal development, or even any desire for it (cf. Holzkamp, 1983, p. 539)
>
> (Osterkamp, 2009, p. 168f)

As Ole Dreier emphasizes (Viuf, 2016), the role of Critical Psychology today is to help people understand their complex surroundings. Technology, social life, knowledge — grand factors change every day. Every time a paper is written, every time new findings are presented, we increase our bank of data and

understanding of human life too. Multiple concepts used in this paper, such as availability, bias, and *self-fulfilling prophecy*, are words that try to encapsulate a small part of human behavior and explanations of it. Looking through the analysis (5.0), could some of the biases or common sense manipulations have become apparent to the viewers, if they knew about the theory behind it? As Kahneman (2011) suggests, having information or knowledge of how bias work prior to experiments, less biases occur. This might seem fairly obvious — if you see a political speech but were warned before not to be influenced, system 2 would be expecting potential system 1 biases and taking the time to process the information. If the role of psychology is to help people understand these cognitive or social implications that political propaganda has, how would that look? And how can knowledge of meaning-making and social representations' mechanisms be made available to the people the theories claim to influence (everyone)? As a thought experiment, imagine, how the school system would look if religion was replaced with culture. Instead of learning specifics about religions in this increasingly secularized world, is not learning **why** we have religions more important? What are minority influence, conformity, and rationality? Surely, the topics are heavy and would have to be adjusted, but it is still a thought experiment. How people react under different circumstances and environments is a quite essential endeavor in any psychological science, so next, I want to propose a different approach to this paper. It must to be stressed that this study has examined the content and not the viewers' reaction — only theoretical speculations about how they could react or understand the content. How would it look, if we got to experience just what happens in the processes of making meaning, or thinking about the content experience?

6.2. Using interviews

How would the interpretation look if an interview with the viewers were conducted? These are only theoretical assumptions of how people make meaning or think critically. Daniel Kahneman reflects upon David Hume, Scottish philosopher, and his work on the association of ideas in 1748. His paper *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* places three central concepts at the core of how associations are created: **resemblance**, **contiguity in time and place**, and **causality** (Kahneman, 2011, p. 43). From this perspective, Kahneman sees this as a perhaps outdated theory, however a good place to start. Studying the association of ideas would preferably require interviewees. Thus far, this paper is basically theoretical speculations of how people would or could react to the content I have presented and analyzed. Now, having a basic understanding of the themes used in the content, would it prove fruitful to base an examination of people's associations or meaning-making on this new perspective. Interviews, where explanations are given as to how the content is perceived, what kind of cognitive associations (Kahneman, 2011) are made and what anchors (Wagner et al., 1999) are drawn upon. These interviews could also be focus group interviews if we were to examine the social implications the content would have and what social representations (Jovchelovitch, 2008) people draw on. Furthermore, how can cognitive polyphasia explain influences in a focus group interview? We have currently seen one side of the story. Examining the other side is something to consider and something I have contemplated throughout the writing process.

Political psychology and all the theories and work composed in this field also seem endless. The number of perspectives, we can take on, are quite extensive. It becomes hard to limit yourself when reviewing the content of political nature, just because there is always a new aspect to consider. One prospect of political psychology I have yet to evaluate is the power that lies in politics.

6.3. Political power

As exemplified in the analysis of Mette Thiesen (5.2.), she displayed political power through propaganda, where she can impose ideas upon people through common sense and the way she utilizes language (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 330). Compared to the ghost hunters (5.1.), what makes her establishment of meaning different? The difference in use of channels (TV vs. social media) is one way in which her influence is different. Another is her occupation. First, her use of media is probably ideal for spreading political messages. The distance between her and her supporters or potential supporters is short. Her speeches are not located on a website through a paywall, or visible through TV at specific airtime. This allows her to interact with her target audience, and have a constant flow of information with the click of a button. Second, her occupation as a politician is profoundly different compared to an amateur ghost hunter. The amount of authority she carries with a position of power influences an audience with much higher force. Furthermore, the subjects she speaks of have more societal influence or more significant consequences. With her occupation comes excellent potential power and thus great responsibilities as well.

> The related struggle between the elite and the crowd is found in all political philosophies of the West, ranging from Marxism's dismissal of the masses fully expressed in Lenin's theory of the vanguard, to populist and fascist ideologies, which use the masses but conceive of them as childish and ignorant, in a state of perpetual lack. Most of these theories, whether in acknowledged form or not, find parallels in LeBon's study of the crowds and the popular mind (LeBon, 1982).
>
> (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p. 433).

The struggle between the powerful and the powerless is not a new endeavor. In the majority of recorded history, we can find a difference in societies and cultures concerning power or influence. We have people in power, and people who aspire to be in control. Finding consistency in today's world has to be paramount if we are not to lose trust in the knowledge around us and our way of perceiving it. So what role does common sense play in this "struggle"?

6.4. How common is common sense?

I recently wrote a paper on an irrational fear of terrorism (Winther, 2016), and one of the discussional components revolves around whether it seems appropriate to use the word "irrational" in this sense. Fear of terrorism after 9/11 created a decrease in air travel and an increase in traveling by car (Gigerenzer, 2004). The vehicular shift resulted in thousands of deaths statistically, which in all its mathematical "glory" we can now consider an irrational fear if the fear was rooted in fear of dying. However, is there a certain comfort in choosing to avoid that which is so vividly imprinted upon their memory? This is again a matter of cognitive polyphasia and how the same information and decisions are viewed differently in the light of common sense and science respectively. Making sense of your surroundings, and a reason why system 1 works so effectively, is because we experience so many impressions and decisions we have to make in just a single day. The previously mentioned decision-making fatigue or system 2 overload (Kahneman, 2011) stresses the importance of not viewing common sense or system 1 decision as something lesser. They play a vital part in our everyday lives and how we make meaning — especially if the alternative is that we succumb to lack of *content-rationality* or *stupidity* (Wagner & Hayes, 2005, p. 102).

Meaning-making can maybe be viewed as a personal, social and subjective experience. Perchance, the phrase "ignorance is bliss" makes sense in specific contexts. Having expert information about every aspect of your life will probably cause inescapable system 2 overloads, but instead of seeing it as an issue, we could, as Kahneman (2011) advocates, appreciate what system 1 does: ease our everyday lives from over-analyzing of our surroundings, becoming anxious and full of concern. The fluidity of everyday life is caused by system 1. Kahneman's (2011) anchoring heuristic and recency bias[4], is bound within availability heuristics. Trying to make sense of **new** or **unknown** information or that, which is unfamiliar, is a prevalent view in both Kahneman's theories as

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[4] Experiencing newer information as having more validity (Slovic & Weber, 2002, p. 18).

well as the theory of social representations through both system 1 and anchoring. This is conventional thinking or common sense. So how can expertise or scientific knowledge help us? We are all experts in some way, we have information that is specific to our occupation, culture, interests, and so forth, but where is the line drawn?

6.5. Becoming an expert — necessity or privilege?

> "The acquisition of skill selectively increases the accessibility of useful
> responses and of productive ways to organize information."
> (Kahneman, 2002, p. 453)

If we are going to understand the intentions behind Thiesen's political statements, expertise is required. By familiarizing oneself with the language used in this particular context and through practice, everyone can become an expert (Kahneman, 2011, p. 231). This is how expert knowledge eventually becomes common sense or available as an intuitive response or in other words: system 2 information and thinking becomes available to system 1. If we compare this to Moscovici, who claims that the way we interpret our everyday lives is through continuity between ways of thinking. Bear in mind that the epistemological differences are present when comparing two different fields of psychology, but as a thought experiment, how can we develop this idea? Kahneman & Klein (2009) claims that expertise promotes a more critical way of thinking about risks compared to those who have not acquire this knowledge. Maybe it becomes a matter of whether or not the desire is there to unfold the secrets of the world or not. Jovchelovitch spells it out for us:

> […]Moscovici and Freud were fascinated by both the rational and the irrational
> and actively sought the line of continuity between the objective, cold and succinct
> laws of a cognitive outlook capable of dispassionately understanding the world,
> and the subjective, hot and erratic dynamics of human passion, imposing disorder
> and capturing the world by feeling and imagination. (Jovchelovitch, 2008, p. 432)

Instead of viewing the ways of thinking as two separate entities with its own purpose, we can see the continuity of both as a trip to the cinema. You want to see how the movie ends. You want to know if the hero dies or not, but you also do not want the journey there to be ruined. All the "uhs" and "ohs". Capturing the world by feeling and imagination or intuition for that matter is a reason why it is hard to call system 1 or common sense as irrational. Through cognition and rational thought, we can capture the moments in life that have unique or significant meaning to our own experience of the world, where emotions can help us focus and choose those experiences into an eventful contemporary interpretation of the world. Instead of seeing a separation or even a distinction as I am doing right now, we also have to appreciate that our emotional experience of the world can promote cognition or cogitation. In this way, perhaps our emotions or intuition play an utmost important part of activating the reflective critical contemplation of our everyday lives. The argument for and against two systems of thinking has been ongoing for decades, centuries and I do not think it will end in the near future. So sticking to our immediate context, lastly, moving away from an almost phenomenological or philosophical discussion, I want to maintain a focus on the media and its role today.

6.6. Media development

The genre of Ghost Hunters is a type of television spawned in the 21st century. The elements of intermittent interviews, editing of footage, the addition of music and narrators and focusing on individuals who are quite "irregular", are quite quintessential for this type of entertainment. These elements are recurrent in reality TV, where there is a certain comical relief in the style. It can be argued that the same comical relief can be experienced by watching the speech by Mette Thiesen unless the viewer can decode the political messages. It all depends on political views as well — left or right. A particular description you can hear amongst people who watch these TV shows often comes in the form of: "it is so stupid that it's funny". It appears almost like a type of intellectual *schadenfreude*, where the degree of absurdity becomes equivalent with the

degree of entertainment on different kinds of media. The social media Facebook has become a massive part of our lives, and the effects on communication and rationality regarding news or information are something that has to be considered concerning critical thinking. This brings me to a final consideration about this paper. The field of decision-making and judgment is currently focusing on the social media, the spread of misinformation and the potential for availability cascades has increased many times over.

> In the domain of social risks, "availability cascades" are responsible for many social beliefs (Kuran and Sunstein, 1999). The point is amplified by the fact that fear-inducing accounts, with high emotional valence, are peculiarly likely to spread.
>
> Processes of social deliberation typically lead like-minded people to accept a more extreme version of the views with which they began (Sunstein, 2000). This is the process known as group polarization (Moscovici and Zavalloni, 1969). If several people fear global warming, and speak to one another, their fear is likely to increase as a result of internal discussions. If group members believe that the United States cannot be trusted in its dealings with other nations, that very belief is likely to be heightened after members have started to talk. Group polarization has not been studied in connection with the availability heuristic. But the clear implication is that the effect of certain available examples will become greatly amplified through group discussion. (Sunstein, 2004, p. 975f).

When looking at Facebook as a global media, the spread of information is swift, and often unfiltered, which the latest hearing[5] with Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook, has revealed. Group polarization of like-minded individuals, as is often the case of follower-pages or Facebook groups, combined with the swift delivery of information is something that a future study should consider. As Sunstein so vividly displays in the quotation above, the juxtaposition of social psychology and cognitive psychology is indeed inevitable if contemporary research is going to keep up with the current trend and development of media.

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[5] From March 2018, Mark Zuckerberg has to explain the misuse of data to, e.g., American Congress over several months.

7.0. Summary

Several wide-ranging and comprehensive theories on human behavior have been examined throughout this paper; ranging from early Marxist theory and Critical Psychology to maintain relevant epistemological vistas to recent theories of decision-making processes. These early theories and fields have helped shape the theories practiced in the analysis and discussion of common sense, critical thinking, and expert knowledge. Through an analysis of Ghost Hunters and a series of political speeches by politician Mette Thiesen, this paper had sought to achieve an understanding of how critical thinking can occur, when exposed to these styles of communication. Through a theoretical content analysis, the subjects revealed several consistent thematic motifs. The use of expert language or common sense has several implications. It enables the individuals in the media to convey messages through language with connotational value. This can impose ideas or unreflected opinions upon the viewers, who lack the expert knowledge to interpret the intent behind the statements. Mette Thiesen can influence common sense thinking within the receiver, causing them to uncritically adopt her views by affecting the meaning-making process through anchoring and objectification(Wagner et al., 1999). Furthermore, by using emotional language, system 1 thinking can potentially be triggered, neglecting system 2 rational thinking (Kahneman, 2011). A critical point in this paper is that meaning-making is a complex system of continuous reciprocal processes between emotional and intuitive common sense thinking, and rational scientific knowledge. Neither is expendable nor superfluous in the process of making meaning in our everyday lives.

Through a discussion of several themes encountered in the content, it is suggested that further studies of cognitive psychology and theory social representations is required with aid from media analysis due to the magnitude social media have in today's society.

8.0. Final thoughts

Due to the methodological nature of abduction and working with a topic as complex as this over time, the questions that drove this paper to examine this field of interest, have inspired new questions. However, one concern in particular seems to remain just as relevant. How can intellectual inequality explain meaning-making in a political context? The idea of intellectual inequality has driven this paper, but as the focus shifted into meaning-making as an essential concept, it slowly dissipated. A question I would ask in a future study regarding the content I have analyzed already is: Is the politician deliberately hiding information or concealing facts? If the setting or culture is knowingly keeping certain aspects of scientific knowledge unavailable to the public sphere of information, how can the citizens be influenced?

There are still many unanswered questions about the social and practical implications of social representations, meaning-making, and decision-making. Some of these questions could ascend by being examined using complementary theories and methodological approaches. Discursive psychology seems apparent when dealing with the analysis of political speeches. Furthermore, studying the rhetorical features or characteristics of political speech, e.g., ways of persuasion using pathos, logos or ethos, may reveal aspects that could further our understanding of how ways of thinking are influenced.

Political psychology is a relatively new field, which, in today's contemporary society, could help in unraveling the dynamics of politics in a psychological context. Rational Choice Theory (RCT) (Chong, 2013) and knowledge gaps (Valentino & Nardis, 2013) could answer some of the concern mentioned in the summary (7.0.). Knowledge gaps deal with the spread of news and information and how specific information is lost in this process.

Another concept in cultural psychology is *agency*, which deals with the feeling of being able to influence the events of your immediate surroundings and everyday life. Perhaps agency can help expand the understanding of common sense in today's context. If the viewers of these TV shows are seen as a subculture within a culture, agency is a distinct concept to apply in a future study.

Last, but not least, I mentioned media analysis in the discussion. The new odd genre of reality TV with combinations of documentary and reality TV could be analyzed and examined where the psychology of communication is the primary approach to understand the features and implications of such a genre.

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