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Gender differences within the German - language Wikipedia

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Abstract: The Wikipedia project constitutes the currently most-used and most comprehensive online encyclopedia in the world (Schneider, 2008, p. 35) and is advertising itself as free and open for everyone, and in terms of an encyclopedia as diverse and balanced at all levels. But from a gender perspective there is a huge discrepancy in sex ratio within Wikipedia's community. In 2005, researchers at University of Würzburg found that women constitute only 10 % of German-language Wikipedia authors (Schroer&Hertel, 2009, p. 104). This fact leads to the presumption, that Wikipedia's reflection of the world mediates and interprets a mainly male conception of the world and thus displays an inequality with reference to modern society. Proceeding from the assumption that women and men have different communication behaviours as well as different perceptions and interpretations of communication in almost all aspects of social interaction including e.g. conversational strategies, conflict management and negotiation skills, we hypothesize that these different ways of communication significantly affect the motivation of female Wikipedia contributors.

Keywords: gender differences, Web 2.0, online encyclopedia, collaborative working, online communication

Les différences entre les sexes au sein du projet Wikipédia en allemand

Résumé : Le projet Wikipédia est actuellement l'encyclopédie en ligne la plus utilisée ainsi que la plus complète au monde (Schneider, 2008, p. 35) et il se présente comme étant libre et ouvert à tous. En tant qu'encyclopédie, il affirme être diversifié et objectif à tous les niveaux. Du point de vue de l'égalité des sexes, il existe cepen-

dant une grande différence entre la part d'hommes et de femmes au sein de la communauté composant Wikipédia. En 2005, des chercheurs de l'Université de Wurtzbourg ont découvert que seulement 10% des auteurs de Wikipédia en langue allemande sont des femmes (Schroer&Hertel, 2009, p. 104). Ce fait laisse présumer que la représentation du monde véhiculée par Wikipédia transmet et interprète une conception principalement masculine de ce même monde et qu'elle fait donc preuve d'une disparité par rapport à la société moderne.

Partant du principe que les femmes et les hommes ont différents comportements de communication ainsi que différentes perceptions et interprétations de la communication concernant presque tous les aspects de l'interaction sociale dont, entre autres, les stratégies de conversation, la gestion des conflits et les compétences de négociation, nous émettons l'hypothèse que ces différentes méthodes de communication exercent une influence considérable sur la motivation des contributrices de Wikipédia.

Mots-clés : différences entre les sexes, Web 2.0, encyclopédie en ligne, travail collaboratif, communication en ligne

Introduction

Hopes were high, that computer mediated communication and the Internet will eventually lead to a more democratic and diverse society. At least the production and consumption of the medium Internet was meant to be inclusive for all and therefore democratic. Not only do we see digital divides across nations, educational and income levels, gender also matters. Carstensen (2009) summarizes the history of the research on gender and the Internet, especially Web 2.0, in three phases. Beginning with the "gendered net" (Dorer, 1997; Neverla, 1998) as a technology mainly created and used by males, evolving to a medium, which could be used as a platform for feminism and public debate (Plant, 1997), finally moving to the idealistic idea of cyberfeminists like Donna Haraway (1991), that the Internet is a "bodyless" medium (Funken, 2002, p. 158) and in the end an idealistic space, without gender. In this bodyless space, gender, race and education should not be relevant.

Looking at the public debates, the Internet as a "world without gender" (Carstensen, 2012, p. 23) is still a far-away utopia: gender still matters. Since computer mediated communication is widely accessible, gender determines not whether you use the Internet, but how and why you use the Internet.

Taking a look on one of the most frequently used websites, Wikipedia, we see a huge gender gap within the production of knowledge. In 2001, when the Wikipedia Project was initiated, it was supposed to be an online encyclopedia „of the best possible quality“, based on the idea of collaborative knowledge and work. Through the participation of potentially everyone, a great number of authors should grant a neu-

tral and balanced point of view. Wikipedia constitutes the currently most-used and most comprehensive online encyclopedia in the world (Schneider, 2008, p. 35) and thus represents an important belief system of the 21st century.

As part of such a collaborative online network, democratic and fair interactions should define the basis on which any interaction takes place, e.g. creating or editing an article as well as commenting modifications or discussing and evaluating information. These processes conduce to collect knowledge from the world or rather to reflect the current status of the world's knowledge – for which encyclopedias were intended (Schneider, 2008, p. 4, 65) –, which simply means that an encyclopedia is an image of the world.

But from a gender perspective there is a huge discrepancy in sex ratio within Wikipedia's community. Depending on which study is cited, only between 10 to 20 percent of the international Wikipedia authors are female (Glott, Schmidt & Ghosh, 2010, p. 7). And this is « worrisome because Wikipedia is ever more powerful as the canon, the go-to source of “knowledge.” And if women aren't contributing, then that putatively exhaustive body of knowledge is only reflecting the knowledge of some of our citizens » (Cassell, 2011).

Within the context of gendered practices in online communication, we aim to investigate the so-called “gender gap” in Wikipedia contributions based on a social discourse perspective. Up until now, a large number of studies and public reports have dealt with Wikipedia's gender issue, striving to explore why such a significantly smaller number of women than men contribute to the Wikipedia project. However, none of the studies has focussed on the communication style of the collaborative network in order to answer the question why and how this female underrepresentation could be explained and ideally balanced. Therefore, this investigation seeks to provide evidence and explanations for this phenomenon. With an exemplary analysis of two Wikipedia talks we will picture how issues like impoliteness and linguistic norm violations (e.g. offences or disregards) are shaping the communicative interaction in Wikipedia.

1. The Wikipedia gender gap research

Research on the Wikipedia Gender Gap has been various. Several studies have investigated the percentage of female authors and editors in different language Wikipedia. This number of female authors ranges from 3% in India to 20 % in the US Wikipedia. Other research on gender differences in Wikipedia contributions has dealt with the question if there is a difference between female and male authors regarding their editing style and what exactly motivates Wikipedians to take part in the project. There is also a broad discussion on how the gender imbalance is affecting Wikipedia's output (Lam et al., 2011).

Antin et al. (2011) e.g. investigated the gender differences in Wikipedia editing styles. They found women and men “made similar numbers of revisions” (*ibid.*,

2011, p. 11), even though still 80% of editors in their sample have been men nonetheless. They looked at a random sample of 500 authors, 25 % of those were categorized as active editors. Even within the group of active Wikipedians women made far fewer revisions, than men (*ibid.*, 201, p. 13). However, if women make a contribution, it is far more substantial, they tend to make more sizable revisions, delete content or create a new article. Steiner/Eckert (2013) qualitatively interviewed 53 contributors and readers in order to find reasons for the lack of female contributions to Wikipedia and they concluded that there “are [...] intersecting perceptions and self-perceptions about women with respect to computer technology, online culture, and expertise.” They add as well, that “women and men are similar in wanting to share knowledge, but seem to start out reasoning from different departure points” (*ibid.*, 2012, p. 25). Collier&Bear (2012) went one step further and summarized that their study “found strong support for the hypothesis that the gender contribution gap is due in part to responses to conflict” (*ibid.*, 2012, p. 389). Female editors are less likely to contribute, due to the high level of conflict, and are more likely to leave an editing situation (*ibid.*, 2012, p. 388) when conflicts occur, as their interview study confirmed. Kittur&Kraut (2010) researched coordination and conflict in online production groups and state that “coordination mechanisms effective for managing conflict are not always the same as those effective for managing task quality, and that designers must take into account the social benefits of coordination mechanisms in addition to their production benefits.” (*ibid.*, 2010, p. 1). Assuming that the gendered differences in communication styles of face-to-face communication might be obsolete in computer mediated communication, Atai&Chahkandi (2012) analysed the linguistic structures of blog entries and discursive posts with a special emphasis on flaming. Flaming comments in computer mediated communication are meant to offend others. The results show that “males’ dominance, gender barriers, and power structures in ‘outhernet’ are replicated in computer mediated communication settings, communicators ‘fall back’ to traditional norms” (*ibid.*, 2012, p. 885).

There are only a handful of studies (Schroer & Hertel, 2009; Möllenkamp, 2007) that focus on the German-language authors and editors, but none deals with the communication styles or the concept of power and interpretation. The question is also relevant for the German-language Wikipedia, as in others: women constitute only 10 % of German authors (Schroer & Hertel, 2009, p. 104). Buchem&Kloppenburger (2013) investigated the German Gender Gap and identified five reasons why women do not contribute to Wikipedia. Most of the reasons can be classified on the individual female level. On the individual level, women do not have enough time to edit, since they do most of the family work. Women have different interest in media. They are more interested in social networks and keeping in contact with friends via facebook, than sharing their knowledge. They have difficulties with the Wikipedia technology, and they do not feel welcome and are irritated by the hostile environment (*ibid.*, 2013, p. 10-11). The last two reasons can also be classified as systemic to a gendered Wikipedia system. In order to overcome the barriers, the authors suggest to train and teach women better, to motivate them to write. Others studies did not replicate some of the mentioned barriers. Missing time

due to family responsibilities was not identified as a barrier in the Collier&Bear (2012) study, unlike some other research suggests. Also, a fear of technology does not seem to matter: Atai&Chahkandi (2012) showed that women have interest in sharing their knowledge, but they are experts in different fields with different topics. Looking at English weblogs, it even seems to be typically female to write online (Herring et al., 2004, 2005; Henning, 2003): “Blogging is many things, yet the typical blog is written by a teenage girl who uses it twice a month to update her friends and classmates on happenings in her life.” (Henning, 2003).

The Gender Gap leads to an imbalance of articles and subjects that are mentioned in Wikipedia. Lam et al. (2011) explored the gender imbalance in the English-language Wikipedia and they “confirm[ed] the presence of a large gender gap among editors and a corresponding gender-oriented disparity in the content of Wikipedia’s articles” (*ibid.*, 2011, p. 1). Moreover, they explain that their results “hint at a culture that may be resistant to female participation” (*ibid.*, 2011, p. 9). Riedl (Forte, Antin, Bardzell & Honeywell, 2012, p. 36) states that “the gender gap is reflected in Wikipedia’s content. For example, articles about films with a predominantly female audience tend to be shorter than those about films men tend to watch.” Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the English Wikipedia concerning “the relative length of articles and the number of articles that concern women’s interests [...] vs. articles that concern men’s interests” (Cassell, 2011; cf. Forte et al., 2012), which we would probably find in the German Wikipedia, too. These three aspects of the gender situation show strongly that the gender gap in Wikipedia has become even more serious, instead of becoming smaller.

The short literature review shows that one of the problems within Wikipedia seems to be the part Wikipedia is most proud of: the collaborative and discursive state of the encyclopedia. Working collaboratively implies a discursive style of knowledge production. But here in the background discussion, a hostile and antifeminist tone is frequently mentioned. So far, no present study investigated this communication behaviour within Wikipedia in order to explain the gender gap, neither for the English nor the German Wikipedia. The communication behaviour in computer mediated environments, as Atai & Chahkandi (2012, p. 886) stated in 2007, suffer from the same gender inequalities, social hierarchies, and power constructions as face-to-face communication. Cassell (2011) supports this stand and pointed out that “it is still the case in American society that debate, contention, and vigorous defense of one’s position is often still seen as a male stance, and women’s use of these speech styles can call forth negative evaluations. Women may be negatively judged for speaking their mind in clear ways and defending their position. A woman who wishes to share knowledge with others might not choose to be part of a forum where engaging in deleting other’s words is key.”

Since written communication within the talk pages of the Wikipedia community is a huge part of editing, besides creating and editing articles, it is worth to look at this feature not only from the technical level but especially from the relationship level, as most difficulties – and therefore potential conflicts – between communication part-

ners are caused there. Describing these processes provides information about how the gender discourse is influenced and controlled in collaborative online networks.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Material

To analyse the communication style in the background discussion, we looked for controversial topics to get a first exploratory impression, whether there are different communication styles worthy of further research.

The debate about the necessity, meaning and use of the masculine generics¹ in the German-language Wikipedia is a great and controversial issue and fruitful for research. Generic masculine nouns or pronouns (German: Generisches Maskulinum) are used, if the sex of a named person is unknown or not relevant or if both female and male persons are included (cf. Klann-Delius, 2004, p. 24, 26, 29). This has been debated very controversially over the past 10 years. Nowadays, an inclusive language, using the female and male expression, is mandatory in most official communication, such as job openings. The German grammar ‘bible’, the DUDEN, suggests using parentheses to include female and males such as “*Mitarbeiter(in), Kolleg(innen)*”. But there is a wide range of other suggestions, such as *MitarbeiterIn*, *Mitarbeiter_in* or *Mitarbeiter** to either include females and transgender. So far the German-language Wikipedia is written in the traditional male form, the generic masculine, and not the inclusive form.

We chose two different talks, which we will analyse exemplarily with regard to gender specifics of communication styles within the course of this discussion. The first sample (table 1) is drawn from the archive of the main talk page in the period March to May 2006 and focusses on a section where the masculine generics within the German-language Wikipedia were discussed.² The second sample (table 2), was taken from a talk page about a straw poll conducted in January and February 2014 concerning the masculine generics and gendering in the German-language WP, looking at a section where the general importance of this debate has been the key issue.³

As all text samples refer to the German-language WP, we juxtapose all chosen parts of the talks with the English translation, being aware of the fact that some

¹ Cf. the Wikipedia article (in German only) to follow the genesis of this debate within Wikipedia itself: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Generisches_Maskulinum.

²http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_Diskussion:Hauptseite/Archiv16#AutorINNEN

³http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia_Diskussion:Meinungsbilder/Generisches_Maskulinum_und_Gendering_in_der_WP

language-specific details can be missed and as such need to be explained additionally.

Demographic information about the Wikipedia authors in our samples regarding the gender aspect, are only derived from their aliases or deduced from the context of the actual paragraphs, since users do not have to indicate their sex at the Wikipedia user pages. Although unlikely, there is the possibility of a certain imprecision by interpreting the gender related demographic data. Looking at how nicknames are chosen in online communication in chat rooms for example, we know that the choice of a certain nickname massively influences the communication process and how a user will be perceived by other users (Beck, 2006, p. 129). Thus, it is most unlikely that male users go for an alias like “little princess” or “sweet_sarah”. Even in a fact-oriented online community like Wikipedia, users identify themselves with their nicknames and often feel a strong need to voice their virtual personality appropriately.

2.2. *Methods*

On the basis of two case examples we will show exemplarily that a) the feministic gender discourse in Wikipedia is not appreciated – primarily by male Wikipedians – (table 1) and b) that discussions behind the scenes of Wikipedia can feature an unpleasant and rude nature, that is not very appealing and motivating for female contributors (table 2). Our findings will be analysed with regard to the impact that Wikipedia has as a source of knowledge on its users and producers considering the public discourse, as well as embedded within the theory of Irigaray (1985), that there is no sexless notion in online communication, and compared with the characteristics of gender-specific communication behaviour following Jäger (2006). She sums up the following typical gender-specific characteristics for written communication:

– Women use more minimisations in communication than men. E.g. “It seems that...” / “I would say, that...” / “Isn’t it the case/true, that...” / “...don’t you think?” / “One could say...” / “If you think about it properly...” / “That’s just an idea...”

– Women often leave the conversation initiative to men. That is why topics, which are introduced by men continue to exist for longer in mixed-gendered groups and are taken up and developed further by women. Whereas topics introduced by women often do not receive male resonance or feedback so that they often come to nothing.

– Women use significantly fewer swear words than men.

– Women have a different range of vocabulary than men. In their traditional areas like household, child education, but also fashion, their linguistic expressions are more precise than those of men.

– Women are easier to interrupt in a conversation. They are more often silent for a longer time and formulate more questions.

– Women respond more to the argument of their conversational partners” (Jäger, 2006).

Schuppener (2002) differentiates the following stereotypes for gender roles on the verbal level:

– For male communication: aggression and power, instruction and discrediting, interruption and overlap.

– For female communication: waiver and subservientness, elisions and missing emphasis, moaning and grouching.

Atai & Chahkandi (2012, p. 887) used a similar tool, identifying put-downs, sarcasm and self-promotion. This status quo of the gender discourse in online media reflects Irigaray’s (cf. 1985a) theory of sexual difference, according to which the allegedly sexless notion of the subject in Western culture subtly reflects the interests and perspectives of men, while women are associated with the non-subject. She further says that there would be no authentic heterosexuality in Western culture, because the culture represents or cultivates only a male subject, not a female one (*ibid.*). In line with this thinking, we can link to feminist linguists, who argue, that the German language is male-petrified and features negative connotations, especially in the range of swear words (cf. Jäger, 2006). Moreover, they elaborated that the communication behaviour of women and men is cooperative/conflict-avoiding vs. confrontational/conflict-seeking (*ibid.*).

3. Analysis and results

The first example shows discussion elements about the debate how and if women should be represented in Wikipedia linguistically and is primarily to image the status quo of the attitude against gender issues within Wikipedia in general and thus to illustrate the relevance of the investigation. As can be seen from *Table 1*, there is strong reluctance and antipathy against this linguistic adjustment to the female terminology. Expressions like “needless discussion”, “pseudo-emancipatory rule”, “top level of absurdity of do-goodism”, “played up problem”, and “pretty pointless” illustrate how hard-fought this debate is held.

It is easy to assume, that most of these antifeminist statements are made by male Wikipedians. Indeed, we do not know, if these statements are mostly written from men, only one was identified as a male journalist and author interested in good writing styles.

Table 1. Examples for reluctant attitude of male WP authors towards gender issues regarding the terminological expansion of « authors » to « female and male authors »

Original German phrases	English translation
<p>« Um ehrlich zu sein, hasse ich jegliche Form dieser vollkommen überflüssigen Diskussion. » (shelm23 16:21, 20. Mär 2006)</p> <p>« Ich habe mich selbst diesem <i>pseudoemancipatorischen Diktat</i> jahrelang (widerwillig) unterworfen; meist nur, um keinen Ärger mit meinen politisch korrekten Freunden zu bekommen. Heute akzeptiere ich diese <i>höchste Absurditätsstufe des Gutmenschentums</i> nicht mehr. «⁴</p> <p>[...]</p>	<p>« To be honest, I do hate any kind of this completely needless discussion »</p> <p>« I (reluctantly) submitted to this <i>pseudo-emancipatory rule</i> for years ; mostly only in order to avoid trouble with my politically correct friends. Today, I don't accept this <i>top level of absurdity of do-goodism</i> any more. »</p> <p>[...]</p>
<p>« Ich weigere mich, eine sprachliche "Gleichstellung" vorzunehmen, die letzten Endes immer voluntaristisch, willkürlich und - falls man sie konsequent durchführen wollte - immer lächerlich und im schlimmsten Fall kulturell destruktiv wirkt. » (Shoshone 26.und 30.3.06)</p>	<p>« I refuse to support a linguistic "equalization", that always will be voluntaristic, random and – in case one is consequent – ridiculous and in the worst case culturally destructive at the end of the day. »</p>
<p>« Ich möchte dringenst davor warnen diese Schleuse auch nur einen Spaltbreit zu öffnen. Die deutsche Sprache (und auch viele anderen Sprachen) ist eben so wie sie ist, und das bedeutet, daß sie oft maskulin gefärbt ist. » (-Wolchik 03:44, 4. Apr 2006)</p>	<p>« I urgently want to warn of at least minimally opening this lock. The German language (as well as many other languages) is like it is and that oftenly includes a masculine coining. »</p>
<p>« ... Will sagen, um dem hochgespielten Problem, das unter normalen Umständen gar nicht existiert, zu entgehen, sollte</p>	<p>« ... want to say, in order to escape from the played up problem, that it would not even exist under normal circumstances, one should not permit</p>

⁴ Emphases in original.

<p>man keine Redundanz erlauben. » (Wikipit 18:26, 10. Apr 2006)</p> <p>«... Allerdings bin ich auch der Ansicht, dass diese Diskussin ziemlich sinnlos ist, wenn man sich vostellt, wie viele der (wenigen) <i>neuen</i> Wikipedianer diesen Text auf der Hauptseite überhaupt lesen. » (Kevinin 00:42, 13. Apr 2006)</p> <p>« ... Wie lächerlich ist das bitte? Schaut mal hier: Wikipedia:Willkommen Fünf mal kommt da nur Autoren vor und jede halbwegs intelligente Frau dürfte sich dadurch nicht beleidigt fühlen... » (Melkor23 23:01, 16. Apr 2006)</p>	<p>any redundancies. »</p> <p>« ... however, I believe this discussion is pretty pointless, if one imagines how many of (the few) <i>new</i> Wikipedians will read this text on the main page at all. »</p> <p>« ...Oh please, how ridiculous is that ? Look at this : Wikipedia:Willkommen Authors is just mentioned five times and any half intelligent woman should not feel insulted by that. »</p>
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The second example portrays a discussion between a female and a male Wikipedia author (as well as one objection from another Wikipedia author with unknown gender), who have different opinions concerning the importance of the masculine generics and gendering in general in the German-language Wikipedia. Apart from the fact that they have technical differences, they do not agree with the respective attitude and communication behaviour of each other. As the exchange of blows below demonstrates, both dialogue partners slide from the technical level of their conversation to the relationship level and thus of course exacerbate the conflict and make it impossible to seek a compromise. At the end, the female conversational partner breaks off the conversation and does not answer anymore.

Table 2. Example for an argument of a female and a male WP author within the straw poll regarding the masculine generics and gendering in the German-language WP

original German phrases	English translation
<p>« Das MB ist der Versuch, Sprach- und Schreibregelungen, die in der akademischen Welt state of the art sind, in eine sprachliche Steinzeit zurückzukatapultieren, um in WP den letzten Hort maskuliner Dominanz auch sprachlich zu behaupten. » --Fiona 18:29, 20. Nov. 2013</p>	<p>« The straw poll is the attempt to push back in the Stone Age any language and writing rules, that build the state of the art, in order to also linguistically maintain the last refuge of male dominance in Wikipedia. »</p>

<p>« Dieser Vorwurf ist wie jeder Versuch, jeden, der deine in den 1970er Jahren stecken gebliebene Geisteshaltung ("männliche Dominanz", allein diese Unterstellung ist männerfeindliche Scheiße, die ich dich hiermit höflichst zu unterlassen bitte) ablehnt, virtuell an die Wand zu stellen, lächerlich und absurd. [...] Bitte lies erst nach, worum es geht, bevor du deine Phrasen abspulst. -- Tuxman 21:47, 20. Nov. 2013</p> <p>« [...] Dein Tonfall ist immer noch nicht WP:WQ-tauglich, Tuxman. Du solltest wirklich 'mal daran arbeiten ohne Fäkalsprache zu kommunizieren.» -- Fiona 08:31, 21. Nov. 2013</p> <p>« Die Tonpolizei zur Hilfe zu rufen, ist kein besonders feministisches Argument. » --91.61.33.70 12:56, 21. Nov. 2013</p> <p>« "Geisteshaltung" bewegt sich auf dem gleichen argumentativen Niveau wie "sprachliche Steinzeit", Fiona. Du solltest wirklich 'mal daran arbeiten wertneutral zu kommunizieren. Alternativ: Nicht jammern, wenn dein Gegenüber auch darauf verzichtet. (Nein, keine Sorge, ich erwarte gar nicht, dass du feminismuskritische Quellen überhaupt inhaltlich zur Kenntnis nimmst. Scheuklappen, wem Scheuklappen gegeben.) » --Tuxman 14:03, 21. Nov. 2013</p> <p>« Tuxman, fass dich an die eigene Nase:</p>	<p>« This accusation shows again how you try to put anyone against the wall who refuses your old-fashioned attitude from the 1970s ("male dominance", this allegation is anti-men bullshit, of which you are kindly obliged to refrain from doing so). [...] Please first check up what the topic is about, before you put in your two cents. »</p> <p>« [...] Your tone of voice still does not fit the WP:Etiquette, Tuxman. You should really work on communicating without gutter language. »</p> <p>«To base yourself on misdoing of tone of voice, is not a very feminist argument. »</p> <p>« "Attitude" is similar to "linguistic Stone Age" regarding the level of argumentation, Fiona. You really should work on communicating neutrally. Otherwise : Stop moaning, if your conversational partner also can do without. (Don't worry, I don't expect that you even technically take note of references which are critical of feminism. Blinkers to whom blinkers are due.) »</p> <p>« Tuxmann, put your own house in order: "Attitude" was brought by you</p>
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<p>"Geisteshaltung" hast du ins Spiel gebracht und mir eine solche unterstellt [...] (mein Stil ist diese Wortwahl nicht). Schon vergessen? Ein Blog auf dem untersten Vulgär-Niveau als "feminismuskritische Quelle" - herrlich, wie ihr beide euch hier selbst vorführt. » -- Fiona 14:30, 21. Nov. 2013</p> <p>« "herrlich, wie ihr beide euch hier selbst vorführt" --> "fass dich an die eigene Nase". Herumreiten auf der Wortwahl (s. Einwand von 91.61.33.70 oben) ist eine valide Methode, inhaltliche Einwände zu ignorieren, aber keine kluge.</p> <p>Übrigens rede ich nicht von dem Blog, sondern von den dort verlinkten Blogs. Ach, sind ja "Scheiß-Masku-Seiten", MANNdat und WikiMANNia, und somit nicht ernst zu nehmen, weil nicht objektiv, ganz im Gegensatz zu profeministischen Blogs, nicht wahr?</p> <p>Kommt eigentlich noch irgendwas Inhaltliches zu dem von mir verlinkten Text oder nur "das ist sprachlich voll scheiße und/oder wurde von blöden Nichtfeministen geschrieben und daher hör ich gar nicht zuuuu, nänänänänääää"? :-) (Pro forma: Ich mag den Feminismus, aber du übertreibst.) --Tuxman 18:14, 21. Nov. 2013</p>	<p>into play. You accused me of having this opinion. [...] (this choice of words is not my style). Forgot about that? Naming a weblog on the lowest vulgar level – great to see how you both make yourselves look like a fool. »</p> <p>« "great to see how you both make yourselves look like a fool " → " put your own house in order". Harping on the choice of words (see above, objection of 91.61.33.70) is a valid method in order to ignore technical objections, but not a very clever one.</p> <p>Btw, I do not talk about the weblog but about the linked blogs on it. Anyway, pages like MANNdat⁵ and WikiMANNia⁶ are "shitty male pages" and thus cannot be taken seriously, because they are not objective, in absolute contrast to pro-feminist blogs, are they?</p> <p>Is there actually still any technical substance to be expected to my linked text or only notes like "that is linguistically total crap and/or was written by stupid non-feminists and thus I do not listen at all boo boo" ? :-) (for the record: I like feminism, but you are exaggerating.) »</p>
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According to Jäger's (2006) gender-specific characteristics, we can state, that the male author definitely uses more swearwords than the female one (cf. "anti-men bullshit", "shitty male pages" and "linguistically total crap"), whereas the female author tries to insult the male one by questioning his intellectual capacities (cf. e.g. "Naming a weblog on the lowest vulgar level"). But most of the other parts of Jä-

⁵ MANNdat is a gender political association for the rights of boys and men.
(<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/MANNda>)

⁶ <http://en.wikimannia.org/WikiMANNia>

ger's characteristics do not apply to this discussion. We can neither find that the female dialogue partner uses minimisations nor that she is discriminated with a non-appropriate range of vocabulary or that the male conversational partner does not respond to her arguments. But according to Schuppener's (2002) classification we can confirm markers of instruction and discrediting used by the male author (cf. e.g. "Please first check up what the topic is about, before you put in your two cents." or "Stop moaning, if your conversational partner also can do without."). The same applies to aspects of aggression and power in a broader sense (cf. e.g. "Is there actually still any technical substance to be expected to my linked text [...] ?"). In contrast, the female author tries to give advice which could be interpreted as moaning and grouching (cf. e.g. "Your tone of voice still does not fit the WP:Etiquette, Tuxman. You should really work on communicating without gutter language.").

But the most crucial point is the fact that the female author gave up. Even if the discussion was not finished at all, she escaped from that debate without last words. Although she did not communicate in the typical female way like Jäger (2006) has summarised, she could not stand the male communication pressure for a longer period. The discussion started one day at 18:29 p.m. and the female author replied the last time the next day at 14:30 p.m. She obviously felt offended or did not believe that the conversation would come to an amicable or at least reasonable end. As we did not interview her, we just can assume that she might have felt inferior on an argumentative or linguistic level, which also implies, of course, the social aspect of inferiority, and further supports the statement of Irigaray (1985b, p. 85), that « Women's social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that a woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to "masculine" systems of representation which disappropriate from her relation to herself and to other women. The « feminine » is never to be identified except by and for the masculine, the reciprocal proposition not being "true". » As far as the female dialogue partner did not adjust to the male communication system, she did not get the opportunity to be an equal member of the current Wikipedia project. Since she left the conversation, her point of view is no longer represented.

4. Discussion

The above shown examples alarmingly picture the current structures of communication behind the scenes of the German-language Wikipedia and thus supports the hypothesis that the conversational behaviour and the attitude of male Wikipedians towards gender issues a) hampers accessibility to Wikipedia for women, b) discourages already cooperating women to stick to it, and c) prevents.

Wikipedia as the most frequented online encyclopedia from becoming a balanced and democratic reflection of the world's knowledge, and is thus missing the chance to have the most positive impact on the public discourse through providing balanced, diverse and democratic – in terms of being properly free and open to everyone – knowledge.

Gender diversity should be understood as a chance to spread up Wikipedia's angle, according to Grosz (2006, p. 10), in order to move to the genderless space of communication.

This paper has argued mainly from a gender dichotomy point of view, we are aware that the social construction of gender and gender styles of communication might seem old-fashioned, when looking at the Internet as a bodyless and genderless medium (Funken, 2002). But we believe the Wikipedia gender discrepancy is too obvious and a main view of the world seems to be missing.

Even though the gender gap in Wikipedia is acknowledged by the Wikipedia executive Sue Gardner, the proposed solutions seem to focus on the female as an individual that needs assistance to survive in the Wikipedia environment. Most of her analysis in her blog (Gardner, 2011) is focussed on teaching women how to write and survive in the Wikipedia universe.

There are several suggestions to overcome some of the barriers. Travis (2013) presents an approach to reduce Wikipedia's gender gap by combining academic teaching with the production of Wikipedia articles. In her Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers course that was attended mostly by women, she encouraged students to participate "in web-based knowledge creation and drawing on their collaborative learning" (*ibid.*, 2013, p. 1). Similar to this is Wikipedia's own project: WikiWomen's Collaborative⁷. But all these ideas focus on the individual and not on the structure of knowledge creation in Wikipedia.

This focus on the individual, that needs support to be able to survive in the Wikipedia world, seems not very fruitful if we take our exploratory analysis seriously. The rude tone and violent communication style has implication in the daily use of Wikipedia, as the prominent German feminist net-activist Anke Domscheidt-Berg (2012) has argued. She points out that, on a regular basis, Wikipedia authors wanted to delete the entry about her person, stating that she is an irrelevant individual using defaming arguments. She reasons, that in the Wikipedia system not the best argument in a discussion wins, but the most persistent person, with the most time to post. Therefore, Wikipedia is less a collaborative environment but more a "the winner takes it all" concept. Thus, not only women need to be trained to survive the hostile environment, maybe the competitive concept of knowledge production needs to be changed.

In this context, the question occurs, how this competitive produced knowledge is interpreted by Wikipedia users and, as a consequence, what impact it has given to a culture, which is faced with a rather unilaterally designed world knowledge.

⁷ http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Research:WikiWomen's_Collaborative

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