
Professional Women at Aarhus University

A cultural-theoretical and cultural-historical study of everyday life of female students at the profession-oriented educations at Aarhus University 1938-1968

PhD Project description
Pernille Svare Nygaard

Introduction

Since the first two Danish women were enrolled at the University of Copenhagen in 1877 (Chakravarty & von Essen 2019: 130), an increasing number of women have attended university. Today, Danish universities have a majority of female students, most notably in the Health Sciences, the Humanities and the Arts (Ministry of Education and Research 2020). This development accelerated during the 1950s, in a period characterized by an increasing prosperity and the emergence of the Danish welfare state (Buus 2008: 302). During the 1960s the Women's Movement focused on equality in society, which also led to a rise in women's educational level and more middle-class women entered the labor market (Poulsen 2018: 6). Another part of the explanation for the predominance of women in higher education today is, that within the last 30 years there has been an academization of the profession-oriented educations (Ministry of Education 1998). However, as early as in 1938, Aarhus University (AU), as the first university in Denmark, offered further educational programs for trained nurses: "Course at Aarhus University for Nurses and for Leading and Teaching Nurses" (Lundström & Stenderup 1978: 577). In 1945 "Special Course in Home Economics at Aarhus University" was established (Spencer & Hansen 1978: 589), and in 1959 the educations for occupational therapist and physiotherapist had their own department at AU: "Department at Aarhus University for Therapy Assistants" (Thomasen 1978: 607).

The focal point of the PhD project is the first educational programs within nursing and health care, home economics and occupational and physiotherapy. It is a study of the women who were enrolled in the programs, and through affective and diffractive readings of archival material, I will address the following issues:

- What were the societal needs in 1938, 1945 and 1959 that led to AU choosing to open up for women to pursue a vocational higher education without already having an academic background?

- Who were the female students in the profession-oriented educations? Which academic identities were created on the boundary between profession and university?
- How can the profession-oriented educations at AU be connected with the influx of women at the Danish universities of today?

The PhD project is part of a larger research project, led by Ning de Coninck-Smith, concerning the women at AU from 1928-2018. The PhD focuses on the historical part of the project, while a postdoc handles the contemporary analysis. This opens up some comparative possibilities that contributes to the processing of the third question of this study.

The PhD, as well as the overall project, is concerned with women's paths into higher education through a special focus on the interfaces between *gender*, *profession* and *university*. The intention is to shift focus on Danish university history from anniversary writings (e.g., Albeck 1978) to how the university is *performed* by people, placed in the many and changing, often conflict-filled situations of everyday life.

The focus on the female students is chosen since there has been a tendency to overlook women's perspective as part of the history of education (Rosenbeck 2016: 32). At the same time there has been significant changes in the education of women throughout the 20th century which has empowered women, and encouraged them to explore new modes of womanhood (Søland 2000). The PhD project relies on the hypothesis, that the importance of education for the modernization of Danish womanhood has changed between 1940 and 1970. The educated women before World War II had to perform a delicate balance between marriage and academic knowledge. The young women of the 1970s, however, did not have to tackle this concern (de Coninck-Smith 2019). Thus, the research project offers a unique opportunity to add a gender historical perspective into the rise of women within education and to develop new concepts and methods, which can highlight the motives and desires of learning and the role of education in the modernization of womanhood.

State of the art

Nursing and health care, home economics and occupational and physiotherapy were in Denmark in the first half of the 20th century considered as both female professions and

useful to society. Through these professions it became more acceptable for women to get an education, and for them to specialize through further education. In the existing research literature, this development is largely attributed to the emergence of the Danish welfare state (e.g., Haastrup 1987, 2000, Buus 2001, Flindt-Jensen & Nielsen 2002). Also strong female pioneers, who had found inspiration abroad, played an important role in the development of the educations within the female professions (cf.: Wingender 1999, Egan & Goodman 2017, Rasmussen & Andreasen 2020). However, in the existing research literature there has been a tendency to focus on the female pioneers, with a preference for the limitations rather than the possibilities of education (Rosenbeck 2014, Chakravarty & von Essen 2019). The PhD project challenges this approach and emphasizes the emotionality of education with the use of micro-stories and an emphasis on affective and diffractive methods. Furthermore, this research project differs from the existing research as it focuses on the perspectives of the female students and their affective encounters with the university in a historical period, where women had become an established part of higher education, but first and foremost were perceived as women (de Coninck-Smith 2019).

As the PhD project is concerned with the *becoming* of women in education in the period 1938 to 1968, an important source for understanding the female generation in this period, is Birgitte Søland's book about the reconstruction of womanhood in the 1920s. The young women did not think of housework as a skilled profession, and this paved the way for the housewives' organizations' attempt to transform housewifery into a profession with its own educational requirements, practices and knowledge (Søland 2000: 149). However, the role of education has only to a limited extent, and not in a Danish historical context, been included in the history of women after World War II (Jöns et al. 2017).

Within the last few decades, gender research in Denmark and internationally has been increasingly inspired by the turn towards affect and emotion (cf.: Massumi 1995, Bloch 2002, Højgaard & Søndergaard 2003, Wetherell 2012, Ahmed 2014). At the same time, the archival turn, or return, has gained ground in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (Gilliland 2017, Ketelaar 2017). In this context, research on women in higher education in England, carried out by Maria Tamboukou, professor in Feminist Studies at University of East London (UEL), is central to this project. Her work combines affective studies with archival research, and she contributes to a perspective on the becoming of women in education with an aim to rewrite the female self into history (Tamboukou 2003).

Theoretical and methodological considerations

The theoretical framework is based on a poststructuralist and neo-materialist, affective and diffractive reading of women's educational history. In this context theory is drawn from studies by Karen Barad (2003, 2014) and Sara Ahmed (2014), and both theoretical as well as methodical inspiration is obtained from scientific work carried out by Maria Tamboukou (2003, 2014, 2016, 2019, 2020) and Ning de Coninck-Smith (2019).

Following Barad's feminist theory of *agential realism*, where *intra-actions* between humans and non-human actors are at play, I accept my empirical material as something that comes to matter in their intra-active becoming, not as things but as a *doing*. In this context, diffraction is a critical analytical tool to constantly make new patterns emerge in what is analyzed (Barad 2003: 801-803).

Ahmed's presentation of affect theory challenges the distinction between affect and emotion and highlights their performative nature (Ahmed 2014: 13, 207). On the basis of Ahmed's norm-critical affect theory I seek to locate and analyze emotional structures found in the material, and thereby discover how experiences has made an *impression* on the female students and with or without thought left an impression in the textual material. In addition, I draw on strategies within affective theory, presented by Knudsen and Stage (2015), and archival research methods by Moore et al. (2017).

Tamboukou's approach to examining "the unheard voices" and analyzing the female subjectivity is through autobiographical writings. Inspired by Michel Foucault, she follows genealogical trails and looks at "system of moments, rather than coherent narratives of 'complete lives'" (Tamboukou 2003: 40). With this in mind, I went through a selection of the archival material. Here I found student applications, which revealed motives for applying and hopes for the future¹. I found budgets for the cost of attending a nursing course which made me think that certainly not all nurses could afford such further education². In the archive I also found a resignation lecture by the first inspector for "Special Course in Home Economics at AU," Mrs Karen Harrekilde-Petersen (1902-1986). According to her, the teacher within home economics had a "weakness" which had spread to the course. This was expressed by the fact that the institution had not been appreciated and utilized as deserved³. This statement raised new questions: What was the *students'* perception? Were they proud of their profession? What was the purpose of getting a further education, from their point of view?

The resignation lecture gives one perspective on the students at a specific time in history. Photographs, correspondences and personal accounts show another perspective. This emphasizes how narratives in the archive open up one at a time, and give rise to going in different directions. It is with this diffractive reading of the material that I seek to find systems of moments, in order to draw a picture of women's educational history from their perspective.

As the PhD project is based on archival studies, there is a close collaboration with Danish archives as well as with Tamboukou, who acts as co-supervisor.

The empirical material consists of memories, diary notes, student applications, course plans, kitchen and hallway books from the women's college in Aarhus, audio and film recordings in combination with articles in professional journals, commission reports and popular magazines.

This PhD is an article-based dissertation, composed of four individual articles with introductory chapters. The articles are dealing with 1) the archival research methods and the ethical considerations, that arise when bringing the "silent voices" back to life, 2) the educational policies in the period around the establishment of the profession-oriented educations at AU, 3) the autobiographical writings by the female students and 4) the importance of higher educations on the modernization of womanhood.

The project will provide new insights about the university history and about the gender historical changes that occurred during the establishment of the profession-oriented educations at AU. The choice of empirical material and the cultural and affect theoretical points of departure will create a broader understanding of emotions as a driving force behind female students' everyday lives in a crucial period of Danish women's history.

During this project, there will be brought attention to the research by publishing articles, participating in international conferences, making podcasts, writing scientific blog posts, and by contributing with relevant insight into departmental work at AU and UEL.

Number of characters: 11993

Bibliography

- Ahmed, Sara (2014 (2004)): *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Albeck, Gustav (red.) (1978): *Aarhus Universitet 1928-1978*. Det lærde Selskab. Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus.
- Barad, Karen (2014): *Diffractioning Diffraction: Cutting-together-apart*. Parallax 20, no. 3.
- Barad, Karen (2003): *Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter*. Journal of Women in Culture and Society 2003, Vol. 28, no. 3.
- Bloch, Carlotte (2002): *Følelser og Sociale bånd i Akademia*. Dansk Sociologi Vol. 13, udgave 4.
- Buus, Henriette (2008): *Indretning og efterretning. Rockefeller Foundations indflydelse på den danske velfærdsstat 1920-1970*. Museum Tusulanums Forlag, Københavns Universitet.
- Buus, Henriette (2001): *Sundhedsplejerskeinstitutionens dannelse. En kulturteoretisk og kulturhistorisk analyse af velfærdsstatens embedsværk*. Museum Tusulanums Forlag, Københavns Universitet.
- Chakravarty, Dorthe & Sarah von Essen (2019): *Nielsine Nielsen. Danmarks første kvindelige læge og akademiker*. Fadl's Forlag, Roskilde.
- de Coninck-Smith, Ning (2019): *Gender encounters university – university encounters gender: affective archives. Aarhus University, Denmark 1928-1953*. Women's History Review. Routledge.
- Egan, Bridget & Joyce Goodman (2017): *Household and domestic science: entangling the personal and the professional*. Journal of the History of Education Society. Vol. 46, Issue 2: Science, technologies and material culture in the history of education.
- Flindt-Jensen, Nina & Thomas Allan Nielsen (2002): *Fysioterapeutuddannelsen i København. 100 år i gode hænder*. Fysioterapeutskolen i København.
- Gilliland, Anne J. (2017): *Archival and Record-keeping Traditions in the Multiverse and Their Importance for Researching Situations and Situating Research*. [In:] Anne J. Gilliland et al. (ed.): *Research in the Archival Multiverse*. Monash University Publishing, Australia.
- Haastrup, Lisbeth (2000). *Husmødre og velfærdsstat*. Folk og Kultur, Årbog for Dansk Ethnologi og Folkemindevidenskab, 29(1), 99-116.
- Haastrup, Lisbeth (1987): *Skolekøkken og arbejderfamilie*. Årbog for Arbejderbevægelsens Historie.
- Højgaard, Lis & Dorte Marie Søndergaard (2003) (red.): *Akademisk tilblivelse: Akademia og dens kønnede befolkning*. København: Akademisk Forlag.

- Jöns, Heike, Michael Heffernan & Peter Meusburger (eds.) (2017): *Mobilities of Knowledge: An Introduction*. [In:] *Mobilities of Knowledge*. Knowledge and Space. Vol. 10. Springer Open, Germany.
- Ketelaar, Eric (2017): *Archival Turns and Returns* [In:] Anne J. Gilliland et al. (ed.): *Research in the Archival Multiverse*. Monash University Publishing, Australia.
- Knudsen, Britta Timm & Carsten Stage (red.) (2015): *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect*. Palsgrave-Macmillan.
- Lundström, Grete & A. Stenderup (1978): *Danmarks Sygeplejerskehøjskole ved Aarhus Universitet*. [In:] Gustav Albeck (red.): *Aarhus Universitet 1928-1978*. Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus. Det lærde Selskab.
- Massumi, Brian (1995): *The Autonomy of Affect*. [In:] *Cultural Critique* 31:83: 83–109.
- Moore, Niamh, Andrea Salter, Liz Stanley & Maria Tamboukou (2017): *The Archive project. Arrival Research in the Social Sciences*. Routledge. London and New York.
- Poulsen, Jørgen (2018): *Uddannelsesvalg i tal. Køn og uddannelse gennem 100 år*. Kvin-fo. Hentet: <https://kvinfo.dk/koen-og-uddannelse-gennem-100-aar/> (30.09.2020)
- Rasmussen, Annette & Karen E. Andreasen (2020): *Magdalene Lauridsen (1873-1957). Danish pioneer in the field of home economics*. *Pedagogic Spoleczna*, Nr. 1 (75). Aalborg University.
- Rosenbeck, Bente (2014): *Har videnskaben køn? Kvinder i forskning*. Museum Tusulanums Forlag.
- Rosenbeck, Bente (2016): *Om at etablere og bryde kønnets grænser i akademien*. *Gränslös. Tidsskrift för studier av Öresundsregionens historia, kultur och samhällsliv*.
- Spencer, Edwin & Ellen Margrethe Hansen (1978): *Specialkursus i Husholdning ved Aarhus Universitet*. [In:] Gustav Albeck (red.): *Aarhus Universitet 1928-1978*. Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus. Det lærde Selskab.
- Søland, Birgitte (2000): *Becoming Modern. Young Women and the Reconstruction of Womanhood in the 1920's*. Princeton University Press.
- Tamboukou, Maria (2014): *Archival Research: Unravelling Space/Time/Matter Entanglements an Fragments*. *Qualitative Research* 14, no 5.
- Tamboukou, Maria (2016): *Feeling narrative in the archive: the question of serendipity*. *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 16(2) 151–166, 2016.
- Tamboukou, Maria (2020): *Feeling the real: the non-nomadic subject of feminism. Theory, Culture and Society*. Forthcoming.

Tamboukou, Maria (2019): *New Materialisms in the archive: In the mode of an 'œuvre à faire*. Feminism & Visual Culture. Mai.

Tamboukou, Maria (2003): *Women, Education and the Self. A Foucauldian Perspective*. Palsgrave Macmillan.

Thomassen, Eivind (1978): Institut ved Aarhus Universitet for ergo- og fysioterapeuter. [In:] Gustav Albeck (red.): *Aarhus Universitet 1928-1978*. Universitetsforlaget i Aarhus. Det lærde Selskab.

Wetherell, Margareth (2012): *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*. London. Sage.

Wingender, Nete Balslev (1999): *Firkløveret og ildsjælene. Dansk Sygeplejeråds historie 1899-1999*. Bind 1. Dansk Sygeplejeråd, København.

Internet pages:

Ministry of Education (1998): *Det 21. århundredes uddannelsesinstitutioner*. København, Undervisningsministeriet.

Hentet 22.09.2020: <http://static.uvm.dk/Publikationer/1999/ur99/hel.htm>

Ministry of Education and Research (2020): *Optagelsen 2020. Køn*.

Hentet 15.09.2020: <https://ufm.dk/uddannelse/statistik-og-analyser/sogning-og-optag-pa-videregaende-uddannelser/2020/notat-8-kon-og-arets-optag.pdf>

Archival sources:

¹ Husholdningshøjskolen ved Århus Universitet, Sager og korrespondance, Beretninger 1946-1963. Arkivinstitution: Viborg. Løbenummer: 1.

² Danmarks Sygeplejerskehøjskole ved Aarhus Universitet, journalsager 1938-1984. Arkivinstitution: Viborg. Løbenummer: 2002-15

³ Husholdningshøjskolen ved Århus Universitet: Karen Harrekilde-Petersens afskedsforelæsning, 25. nov. 1972. Arkivinstitution: Viborg. Løbenummer: 1