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Introduction: what does coming to terms with the past mean?

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Introduction

The question ‘what does coming to terms with the past mean?’ is one of the most puzzling questions in the social sciences. For some, like Theodor W. Adorno, the matter of coming to terms with the past is ‘essentially ... a matter of the *way* in which the past is called up and made present: whether one stops at sheer reproach, or whether one endures the horror through a certain strength that comprehends even the incomprehensible’ (1986, p. 126, emphasis in original). For others, it is a matter of justice (Teitel, 2000), a process of ‘overcoming the past’ at the heart of political transition (Habermas & Michnik, 1994), or accountability based on historical ‘truth’ that paves the way for democratic consolidation (Tismăneanu, 2008).

What all these orientations, and others, have in common is that they are about how one might start to think about what Habermas (1998) called the ‘political morality of a community’ faced with the ‘ghosts’ of its own troubled past.

When that past is the communist past, like is the case with this book, then one might start thinking about political morality by exploring perspectives, methods, practices, that are, typically, grouped under the umbrella term ‘post-communist transitional justice’. This book is an invitation to identify the means by which we can

treat, research and respond to the challenges of post-communist transitional justice as social and cultural product. This makes sense for at least one fundamental reason – we experience, participate in or judge transitional justice (its influence, effects, controversy, etc.), as a pervasive cultural dimension. The moral vocabulary of transition around guilt, shame, responsibility, justice, remembering, etc., is a culturally- and societally-derived vocabulary. Our desire to tackle head-on the social injustices of transition, hold torturers accountable, or come up with moral lessons for future generations, indeed, our ambivalence, avoidance, or suppression of associated ethical issues, is itself a cultural product of societies in which controversies around how to take communism into public consciousness abound.

Transitional justice as situated practice

In this book I approach transitional justice from the perspective of discursive social psychology. I explore a canonical set of practices that are usually categorized and/or described as transitional justice practices (e.g., public disclosures of wrongdoing, truth and reconciliation commissions) through the lens of a social science perspective, that of discursive social psychology, a perspective that focuses on *situated practice* in discourse (Edwards, 1997). This book explores the contribution of discursive social psychology to understanding transitional justice as situated practice.

In addressing transitional justice as situated practice, I argue, the discursive social psychologist and transitional justice scholar can learn from each other. The first step is made by the discursive social psychologist, like myself, that turns to the transitional justice scholar in order to glean the overall, comparative, picture of the vagaries of transitional justice in eastern Europe.

most of the post-communist states, including Poland, Hungary and Lithuania, experienced politicized, delayed, and/or narrowed or truncated measures over the course of their transitional justice efforts. Romania's late public disclosure program was temporally and structurally similar to Bulgaria's, and a significant improvement on Albania's ... Romania's missed opportunities were post-communist missed opportunities, with all of the countries in the region struggling to implement measures that could authentically and fairly engage with the past. Romania is neither the regional laggard nor the regional vanguard, but finds itself at an uncomfortable spot in the middle.

Horne, 2017, p. 74

Equally, as I argue here, the discursive social psychologist can become an invaluable resource for the transitional justice scholar or practitioner.

The crux of the argument expounded in this book is that in order to understand the different forms and consequences of transitional justice practices (both formal and informal), transitional justice studies need to incorporate a reflexive metatheory of 'communication' in their theorizing and empirical approaches. By reflexive metatheory of communication, I mean a theoretical and analytic orientation to discourse produced in and by socio-communicative events, one that goes beyond an individualistic standpoint.

But let me first say what I mean by 'communication' in this context. I follow Edwards (1997, p. 16-17) in treating communication as a metaphor. As Edwards put it,

it may appear strange to think of communication as a metaphor – is it not a phenomenon, indeed *the* phenomenon, the very thing we need to study? In fact, I want to turn away from the notion of discourse as communication, and it is largely because of the unwanted metaphorical baggage it carries. The notion that discourse is a form of social action should not be equated with language as 'communication'... the notion of communication ... invokes an image that is itself stubbornly individualistic. It stems from starting not with discourse as a phenomenon, but from psychology, where two (imagined) individuals, possessing thoughts, intentions, and so on, have the problem of having to get these thoughts and intentions across the airwaves via a communication channel.

As Edwards, I want to start with, and focus on, discourse as a form of social action, and not as means of communication between people and minds. By discourse I primarily mean 'all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 7). Yet, following Smith (1987), and more recently Middleton and Brown (2005), I engage with a broader definition of discourse as

a conversation mediated by texts that is not a matter of statements alone but of actual ongoing practices and sites of practices, the material forms of texts ... the methods of producing texts, the reputational and status structures, the organization of powers intersecting with other relations of ruling in state agencies, universities, professional organizations, and the like

Smith, 1987, p. 214

The discursive psychological approach I take in this book treats discourse as reflexive product of cultural orders – discursive, material, legal, ethnic, economic, political, that intersect, relate, network, and feed into each other. Those who are already familiar with discursive psychology can read on; other readers are advised to start with chapter 8, for a full description of the particular background of discursive social psychology.

In this book I explore, and illustrate, several ways in which the transitional justice scholar or practitioner might engage with this broader notion of discourse. There are three significant avenues that the transitional justice scholar or practitioner might use to engage with this broader notion of discourse. The points sketched below are developed in chapters one and two, and, more generally, across the book as a whole.

Firstly, by taking seriously the idea that what we broadly call transitional justice forms and practices can be studied as (societal) social (by)products of the social organization of collective memory in the public arena. This involves an appreciation of the notion that everyday and elite transitional justice practices are inherent social and cultural creations, aspects of collective life. These are practices that are accomplished in

discourse through words, images, symbols, and intertwined, and in relation, with other social and material practices. Secondly, by exploring, *in situ*, in actual practices of ‘confronting’ the communist past, how individuals, communities, and collectives, like nation-states, turn themselves into ‘socially organized biographical objects’ (Plummer, 2001). And, finally, by analysing the different types, and nature, of relations that get established between various cultural repertoires, texts, genres, their producers, and their audiences. Here I follow the dictum, aptly formulated by Blumer: ‘respect the nature of the empirical world and organize a methodological stance to reflect that respect’ ([1969] 1998, p. 60).¹

A discursive social psychology based on an extended definition of discourse can complement transitional justice approaches in history and political science by, firstly, providing a robust analytic approach and toolkit, as well as a different vocabulary of (social) science; and secondly, by identifying meaningful gaps, absences, ambiguities, etc. in extant theorizing and empirical approaches. A transitional justice approach to the intricacies of everyday and elite practices of coming to terms with the communist past needs a stronger intellectual commitment to researching the phenomenon of ‘transitional justice’ as a cultural product and situated practice. This might lead to a better appreciation of the idea that researching transitional justice practices ought not be limited to, exclusively, conceiving as, or reducing them to, either psychological or socio-political-ideological problems. Researching transitional justice practices as cultural products is, I argue, an enterprise geared toward finding the empirical means of resolving a much older, and deeper, problem/tension highlighted by Hannah Arendt: “the modes of thought and communication that deal with truth ... are necessarily

¹ I showed elsewhere, in my work on extreme prejudice (see Tileaga, 2015), how this principle is a *sine qua non* of a very productive way of analyzing social issues and social problems.

domineering; they don't take into account other people's opinions" (Arendt, 1977, p. 241).

One of my goals in writing this book was to try to offer an account of how transitional justice studies might engage with the paradigmatic tension identified by Arendt. I argue that that is not achieved solely through a dialogue with discursive psychology (transitional justice studies are already in conversation with other scholarly fields in the social sciences), but that discursive psychology can, nonetheless, prove to be a key component, vantage point, in this broader intellectual dialogue around the nature, reach, influence and effect of transitional justice practices that is already underway within and across the social sciences. One cannot understand the nature of justice (reparatory justice or otherwise) in post-communist contexts if one simply starts with an operational definition of these processes. One also needs to be able to describe these practices *in situ*, that is, in and through the *ways* they matter to people, organizations, both as producers and consumers of culturally-embedded meaning.

Some argue that debates around transitional justice do not, any longer, trigger moral-political dilemmas that can take the citizens of post-communist democracies to the street, stir passions or transform the governance and management of political and judicial frameworks. It is tempting to think of transitional justice as something of the past. Yet, as Horne (2017) rightly pointed out, transitional justice does not have a 'built-in expiration date'. It is also tempting to believe that there is nothing else to gain from old archives, that they are nothing but dust, unwelcoming places that only testify to the anachronism of the communist regime (Andreescu, 2013). Yet, debates around, and specific undercurrents of, transitional justice endure, albeit not always at the forefront of people's minds. The occasional resurgence of debates around truth, memory,

victimization, collaboration, in former communist countries still creates marked moral uneasiness among politicians and the general public.

The importance of understanding transitional justice practices in the way they matter for people and organizations, extends beyond the formal (vertical) relation of individual citizens and state, but, instead, pervades (horizontal) situated practices of various kinds in which people, organizations, communities, etc. are elements in networks of mediated activities (Middleton and Brown, 2005). To understand the nature of these situated practices implies tying the notion of transitional justice to an emerging array of conceptions, hypotheses, gravitating around the notion of *discourse as a form of social activity*.² As Edwards argues, 'discourse can be considered as a form of social activity like any other' (1997, p, 17).

In this conception, discourse is not a carrier of meaning but activity in and of itself. For the kinds of issues discussed in this book one does not need to work with causal or interpretive models of why people might be doing what they're doing (saying or writing). There is no necessary underlying picture (political or otherwise) - although it is true that some of the practices concerned are, nonetheless, political or politicized - that needs to be extricated from a broader socio-political framework, or explained in socio-psychological terms.³ Key is to turn instead to analyzing 'discourse practices as natural phenomena' (Edwards, 1997, p. 19). Public, socio-communicative, events of the type discussed in this book (including what people make of them, how they respond to

² So the question then becomes: what considerations do people 'make relevant to their actions, and to other people's actions' (cf. Edwards, 1997, p. 17). Things like norms, rules of conduct, things that you are supposed to do or say or not supposed to do or say, are, as Edwards put it, 'grist to the mill for their role as participants' resources' (Edwards, 1997, p. 18).

³ This does not mean that the analyst does not adhere to a particular (political) version of reality or is uncommitted to a critical agenda - doing discursive psychology does not invite cold distancing from injustice, oppression, prejudice, and similar concerns. Quite the contrary, doing discursive psychology means 'becoming participants in event construction, offering our own versions of things, choosing amongst accounts ... and inevitably to provide further materials for analysis.' (Edwards, 1997, p. 16)

them, how they construct psychological implications arising from them) are *available* in discourse. Descriptions and accounts of what happened, and why, and who is blame, who is accountable, abound in the public sphere – the tumult of educated opinion in newspapers or television mingles with the hubbub of everyday conversations around some of these issues. From a discursive psychological perspective these descriptions and accounts are not secondary to what they describe or account of and for. Rather, they constitute the nature of whatever is being talked or written about.

What the public discussion around coming to terms with the past in eastern Europe has shown, if anything, is that people attend to socio-communicative events in the public sphere in terms of producing, and using contentious descriptive categories which other people or the same people in other occasions or contexts may describe differently. One could argue that, at its roots, the public controversy over the legacy of communism in eastern Europe is a controversy over morally implicative *descriptions* and *categories*: when is someone, *recognizably*, an ‘informer’ or ‘collaborator’? What are the character traits that make someone a ‘collaborator’ or a ‘dissident’? What makes communism a moral problem?

In discursive psychological terms, descriptions and categories are the building blocks of discourse - rhetorically available resources for levelling accusations, or for defending oneself against, for claiming that someone is accountable for their past behaviour, for constructing moral portraits of people and of historical durations.

Historical redress and conceptions of memory

Although the analysis of the dynamics of individual and social memory plays an important part in grounding transitional justice approaches, discussions and debates about the nature of different conceptualizations of memory that drive, and underpin, these approaches are conspicuously absent.

The various theoretical and practical concerns with lustration, decommunization, restitution of property, retroactive justice and, more generally, with the new political vocabulary of transition, can be said to have arisen out, and received their significance from, the struggles of institutional and individual memory against the background of living with troubled, painful, and difficult, pasts (Stan, 2006).

Active, positive, revealing acts of remembering are usually seen as key means through which injustices can be redressed, victimization and responsibilities recognized, and suffering acknowledged (Tismăneanu, 2008). One, less-considered, aspect is the idea that troubled, painful, and difficult pasts can also be so ‘disruptive or disorientating that they become disconnected from the present, unamenable to narrative form and so off limits as a resource for making sense of experience’ (Keightley and Pickering, 2013, p. 151). The memories (especially, personal memories) that provided the impetus, and the substance, of transitional justice might be described as “vital memories,” (Brown and Reavey, 2015) that is, memories that were articulated out of living with a difficult and sometimes contested past (Byford and Tileaga, 2017). What defines “vital memories,” Brown and Reavey argue, is that they are simultaneously *problematic* and *essential* in ‘terms of what is being recollected and its significance for ongoing identification with self and others.’ (Brown and Reavey, 2013, p. 55).

I argue that broadening the scope of historical redress and justice entails a fuller appreciation of alternatives that place more emphasis on different forms and conceptions of memory which, in turn, might allow us to delve deeper into vital memories of troubled, difficult and painful pasts. In chapter three I show how the Tismăneanu Report that has condemned communism in Romania establishes itself as a foundational transitional justice initiative by constructing an ideological representation of communism around one of the most entrenched and enduring ways of thinking about memory: the idea of memory as storage of information, encoding and retrieval - the idea of memory as archive.

The 'archive' metaphor is constitutive of everyday and scientific meanings of memory around the permanence and solidity of memory. According to Brockmeier, "Western common sense, both in everyday life and in science, assumes that there *is* a specific material, biological, neurological, and spatial reality to memory—something manifest—in the world." (2010, p. 6, emphasis in original). Institutional and personal archives are the place for historical encoding and storage of information, and they are followed by contemporary retrieval based on the principles of accessibility and activation. In the process of reckoning with a troubled past, texts, documents, etc. are 'activated' by the gaze of the historian, and made to speak of, and stand for, the vital memories of millions of people who lived under communism. Their accessibility is also crucial to this entire process. Although accessibility does not guarantee truthfulness, accessibility is a key criterion for judging their inclusion in the encoding-storage-retrieval sequence. The archives of the communist secret political police, the notorious and much-feared *Securitate*, become a 'privileged space,' (Lynch, 1999) a space of discovery, from where carefully selected details are used to support an emerging

narrative. The key (self-assigned) task of the historian or political scientist is to construct a representation of the recent past by uncovering 'the facts about the past' and recounting them 'as objectively as possible.' (Skinner, 2002, p. 8). Archives, and texts, documents, contained therein, 'universalize or objectify, create forms of consciousness that override the 'naturally' occurring diversity of perspectives and experiences.' (Smith, 2004, p. 195-196).

As I show in chapter three, although it can be argued that the Report has also helped 'decentralize' and 'democratize' memory (cf. Nora, 1996), it, arguably, gave priority to writing about communism as an 'an administratively constituted knowledge.' (Smith, 1974, p. 261). Yet, the communist regime was not only an administratively constituted knowledge but also knowledge incorporated into various types and kinds of witnessing and testimonies, and various other public sources of memory. In order to appreciate the multitude of public sources of memory one needs to be able to reject a naïve notion of the past as a repository of social meaning, and of memory, as solidly preserved permanently in a material (or mental) archive.

The struggle to find socially and individually acceptable stories, the mediation of vital memories by personal and social relationships, and material environments is typically portrayed as a contingent, active and conscious social activity. Yet, I want to argue that the unconscious also plays a part in the mediation of these vital memories. I continue to consider the Tismăneanu report in chapter four and show how a closer inspection of narratives and accounts reveals gaps, silences, avoidances, ambivalence and, more generally, a tension between wanting to express the uniqueness of a painful past, and wanting to repress unwanted implications. I argue that this tension points to deeper difficulties that people (and collectives) experience when encountering, and

facing, a painful, troubled past. 'One wants to get free of the past,' Adorno proclaimed, 'one cannot live in its shadow,' but the 'past one wishes to evade is still so intensely alive.' (Adorno, 1986, p. 115). In chapter four I focus on one set of social practices that are relevant to understanding the official appraisal of communism in public consciousness - I call these practices 'social practices of avoidance.'

One of my main concerns here is with understanding the role of what Billig (1999) calls 'social repression' and what Frosh (2010) describes as 'resistance.' Billig's account of repression stresses the importance of social practices of 'avoidance' that are part and parcel of conversational practices of society around topics or feelings that are too 'difficult' to discuss.⁴ Resistance refers to "something to be overcome"; analysis is a process of understanding the mind that is "at war with itself, blocking the path to its own freedom." (Rose, 2007, p. 21, cited in Frosh, 2010, p. 166). Also, I am guided here by LaCapra's (1994, p. 66) insights on the foundational problem that is facing historians and that concerns

how to articulate the relation between the requirements of scientific expertise and the less easily definable demands placed on the use of language by the difficult attempt to work through transferential relations in a dialogue with the past having implications for the present and future.

In his work on the Holocaust, LaCapra distinguishes between "constative" historical reconstruction and "performative" dialogic exchange with the past (1994, p. 4). As he argues, this latter "performative" dialogic exchange relies on certain unconscious memory activities. The process of canonization of a single collective narrative around the nature of communism in Romania has been, predominantly, a constative historical reconstruction based on the factual reconstruction of experiences and an archival

⁴ See Tileaga (2015) for the relevance of 'social repression' in the analysis of extreme prejudice against ethnic minorities

conception of memory. In contrast, according to a psychosocial conception, whatever comes out of the past, whatever is “discovered” in dusty, previously unexplored corners of mental and physical archives, can trigger resistance, repression and avoidance, and can activate unconscious fears, phantasies, unexpected identifications, as well as unresolved conflicts.

I argue that both notions are useful to understanding the subtleties of ambivalence towards the communist past, and, particularly, avoidance. What is expressed, but also, and perhaps more importantly, what is resisted or repressed becomes of crucial importance. A critical, progressive, elite culture that has supported the righting of old communist wrongs in order to ensure the continuation of a liberal tradition and the affirmation of democratic values is, nonetheless, not devoid of ambivalence. I discuss in chapter four this fraught performative dialogic exchange with the past in the Tismăneanu Report especially that ‘exchange’ that constitutes communism as Other, not ‘us’. In doing so I follow LaCapra in the assumption that the basis of a performative dialogic exchange with the past is rooted in the notion of “working-through” taken-for-granted ethical and political considerations. As LaCapra argues, ‘working-through implies the possibility of judgment that is not apodictic or ad hominem but argumentative, self-questioning, and related in mediated ways to action.’ (1994, p. 210)

By incorporating a psychodynamic conception of memory in analyses of situated practices one can unearth more of the nature of resistance (and repression) that might help one understand the successes and failures of different forms and manifestations of historical redress in the public sphere. The topics of repression and resistance in the Romanian context will vary from those of other Central and Eastern European

countries. Any thorough analysis of social repression and resistance will need to identify and explore general, but also specific, topics subject to repression and resistance. Post-communist transition has developed its own complex social conventions and discursive codes that resist and repress the topic of collective involvement in the perpetuation of the communist system.

In chapters five, six and seven I introduce, and work with, a 'relational' conception of memory in my analyses of public apologia for collaboration with the Securitate, and responses to it. The discursive (Harré & Gillett, 1994), narrative (Bruner, 1986), and sociocultural (Valsiner & der Veer, 2000) turns have pushed the study of memory as both influenced by and influencing social and cultural frameworks. The realization that memory is not reducible to an archival model can be traced back to one of the classic formulations in the psychology of memory: 'I have never regarded memory as a faculty,' Frederic Bartlett argued, 'narrowed and ringed round, containing all its peculiarities and all their explanations within itself. I have regarded it rather as one achievement in the line of the ceaseless struggle to master and enjoy a world full of variety and rapid change' (1932/1995, p. 314). Bartlett's exegesis is showing how cultural (and community) meanings are not fixed, and how social conventions, social representations, as well as social institutions play a pivotal role in the process of remembering (Middleton and Brown, 2005).

The realization that memory is not reducible to the encoding-storage-retrieval model can also be traced to the work of French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs on how people acquire their memories. Halbwachs famously argued that 'it is in society that people normally acquire memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.' (1952/1992, p. 38). Both Bartlett and

Halbwachs believed that one needed to move away from individualistic, closed, nomothetic understandings of memory, and to research social life in and through the way in which individuals create life-worlds and actively use language-games that are 'saturated' by the implicit or explicit presence of others, by relational, discursive and dialogical resources, by narrative tools, and ultimately by wider social frameworks of meaning-making.

The crux of a relational or sociocultural approach to memory that derives from the classic works of Bartlett and Halbwachs can be described along three lines. Firstly, social memory is a social/cultural product. The task of researchers is to describe and understand the circumstances (for example, political, sociocultural, discursive) under which social memory *becomes* a public affair. This entails treating social (collective) memory as a 'relational process at the intersection of different durations of living.' (Middleton and Brown, 2005, p. vii). Social factors, social frameworks, and social relations make social remembering possible. For instance, Rowe, Wertsch and Kosyaeva (2002) have shown how history museums mediate the public memory of events and people by linking vernacular, everyday stories with official ones, linking personal lives to collective narrations in the public sphere. By making official narratives more accessible, and by bringing vernacular narratives to the surface, museums become sites where both consensus, as well as contestation, resistance around national and local history can take shape. A similar example is given by the recent 'terror sites' and national museums dedicated to the legacy of communist totalitarianism in Eastern Europe (for example, the famous House of Terror in Budapest). They are designed as tools for the political socialization of younger generations through mnemonic socialization, that is, socialization into particular images (of genocide), memories (of

victimhood), and narratives (of redemption) about the past, present and future of the nation (Mark, 2010).

Secondly, interpretations and understandings of the recent past are a concern for professional academics as much as they are for ordinary people. Professional academics and lay people may make use of and apply various (general and particular, universalist and individualist) interpretive schemes to understanding and interpreting a troubled and difficult recent past. The key task of a sociocultural approach to memory is to describe the variety of interpretative practices and to study the dilemmatic, and often contradictory, nature of social and political stance taking. For instance, Bucur (2009) shows how both the communist and post-communist “official commemorative calendar” of the Romanian state has attempted to create national commemorative rituals (around a “heroes cult” and commemorative sites such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Mărășești Mausoleum) that implicitly or explicitly clash with local communities' own way of remembering and constructing social memories.

And, finally, social memory neither simply reflects nor expresses ‘a closed system for talking about the world,’ but rather ‘contrary themes, which continually give rise to discussion, argumentation and dilemmas’ (Billig et al., 1988, p. 6). Social memory is distributed beyond one’s head, and as such it ‘involves active agents, on the one hand, and cultural tools such as calendars, written records, computers, and narratives, on the other.’ (Wertsch, 2007, p. 646) The contingency, context-related and context-dependent emergence of social memory is contrasted with the presumed stability and permanence of archival memory. The troubled history of reconciliation in South Africa is a relevant example here. Andrews shows how in the context of testimonies and responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) there was no unique or collective narrative

model that was used by all of the social actors (Andrews, 2007). Although citizens recounting tales of suffering represented a unique (and successful) model of rebuilding a “broken” nation, it was far from being a uniform one, with different stories being told, sometimes as the result of pressures on victims to tell certain kinds of stories while testifying, or as the outcome of different experiences and perspectives of victims and perpetrators, and various other individuals and groups challenging official versions of the past and demanding redress. As Andrews argues, the concern of the TRC focused on the creation of acceptable, believable, pragmatic versions of memory more than on the truthful collective memory, and therefore on developing realistic and usable images of the past history of race relations rather than truthful ones.

Moreover, social/collective memory is also multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2009). It points in different directions, and operates on many fronts, at both conscious and unconscious levels. It was Rothberg who argued that ‘collective memory is not simply an archive awaiting political instrumentalization; the haunting of the past cannot be harnessed in the present without unforeseen consequences.’ (p. 223) A telling example comes from Gallinat whose work focuses on the narrative work of a group of former political prisoners in their attempt to communicate their experiences of a painful past. She notes that, in most of the cases, participants could not move their stories beyond general phrases like “horrible,” “awful,” or “unbearable.” (Gallinat, 2006). In a similar way very particular episodes of abuse in Stasi prisons were not mentioned, although other aspects were mentioned (lack of hygiene, privacy, sleep deprivation, etc.). The narratives of the inmates were also punctuated by heavy silences and difficulties of finding the right words. For Gallinat, all this shows the ‘tension between wanting to transmit the extraordinariness of the episode and a feeling of

failing to do so.' (2006, p. 354). Gallinat's interviewees were not finding it easy to be themselves; they were struggling to find both social and individual acceptable (rational and moral) identities that would satisfactorily capture their vital memories of pain, abuse, and marginalisation.

In chapters five, six and seven I show how one might go about applying the idiographic principles and ethos of a sociocultural conception of memory, within a discursive psychological framework, to researching public apologia for past wrongdoings (chapter five), remembering with and through archives (chapter six), and reactions to and conceptualizations of moral transgression (chapter seven). What discursive analyses in these respective chapters show is that social practices (confession, remembering, etc.) are culturally mediated experiences. They do not reflect the 'hidden' psychology of the person. I show, for example, that making 'moral amends' presupposes a cultural orientation to an operative cultural norm of remedial work on social relationships through the use of language. In this context, remembering is a social practice that enables 'the production of subjectivity' (Brown, 2012, p. 239) and the mobilisation of self-protective and self-affirming cultural repertoires. Analyses of public apologies (and responses to them) reveal that social actors inhabit, enact, defend, or suppress multiple social identities, and they construct their accounts out of a carefully choreographed patchwork of material/cultural tools (narratives, written records, and social technologies). The range of social practices of accounting identified in this context index socio-cultural meanings (including the sociocultural meaning of what it means to be 'sorry') about memory, people, identities, events, social relations, and institutions.

Structure of the book

Each chapter in this book is concerned with the promises, as well as with the limitations, of discursive social psychology in analyzing situated, everyday and elite, transitional justice practices. I will be arguing that, although transitional justice studies have provided robust explanatory models of socio-cultural and political factors in transitional justice, they are still quite limited in addressing individual and collective phenomena that, ostensibly, cannot be described satisfactorily via its current disciplinary models in political science and history.

In this book I show how discursive psychology can be used to understand some of the enduring and obstinate dilemmas around the legacy of communism in eastern Europe, with a focus on Romania. I do not adopt a comparative perspective nor am I concerned with identifying the macro-social determinants of post-communist transition – this is a book of social psychology not of history or political science.

I do not feel I have to justify the choice of Romania in the way that a political scientist or historian might do. I do not propose to focus on Romania because of yawning gap in scholarship or because some of the issues related to transitional justice I raise here are underrepresented – there has been, and there is a lot being written on Romania and its convoluted post-communist adventure and transition. I have not chosen Romania because it had one of the most controversial transitions from communism to democracy – other countries have struggled with, and are still marred, by the legacy of the communist. If anything, it has been described as ‘ambivalent’ at most, ‘neither the regional laggard nor the regional vanguard, but finds itself at an

uncomfortable spot in the middle.’ (Horne, 2017, p. 74). I am less interested in why Romania occupies this uncomfortable spot in the middle, as Horne put it.

This book, nonetheless, engages with the (Romanian) post-communist transitional justice ethos described by Stan (2017) as “muddling through the past”, ‘by neither fully reckoning with its legacies of rights abuse, nor fully rejecting their reconsideration’ (p. x). I am interested here in some of the public forms and manifestations that this “muddling through the past” has taken.

In chapter one I sketch the contours of a (future) productive relationship between transitional justice studies and discursive psychology. I argue that transitional justice researchers (predominantly political scientists and historians) work with an incomplete conception and theorization of communication, and of the relationship between memory and historical redress. I suggest that transitional justice need not be seen as an abstract means of bringing about democratization, but rather as a contingent, historical, process reflected by and in a myriad of interweaving every day and elite situated practices.

Chapter two critically discusses some of the core tenets of researching remembering in the public sphere. In this chapter I discuss, among other things, some tensions between the post-communist collective and cultural memory of communism, the role of public sources of memory, and some problems with understanding and explaining nostalgia.

In chapter three, the first analytic chapter, I address several questions by considering the social construction of communism in one of the most important (albeit late) texts of the Romanian transition: the Tismaneanu Report condemning communism in Romania. How does collective memory emerge at the national level, in the public sphere, especially in the context of radical social change and contested attempts at appraising

the legacy of former regimes? How is it turned into a national narrative, one that can foster the shaping of new (national) identities and 'usable' pasts? More specifically, how is communism appraised as both object of historical knowledge and collectively remembered event?

Chapter four continues the analysis of the Tismaneanu Report from chapter three. It looks at how the condemnation of communism is legitimated using both moral and scientific grounds, how communism is described, and judged, as a moral problem. I show, however, that describing, and judging, communism as a moral problem is done by proposing a specific method of reasoning about society, history and memory that constitutes communism as Other, not 'us'.

Chapter five looks at the specific phenomenon of public apologia for wrongdoing. It examines, in detail, a 'confession' of 'being an informer' of a Romanian public intellectual in a letter sent to one of Romania's wide-circulation national newspapers. The chapter shows how disclosure and reconciliation with the past are action-oriented and participants' accomplishments. Also, the chapter shows that public apologia for wrongdoing displays a double dynamic of degradation: personal and institutional. I argue that public apologia serves a two-fold function: on the one hand, it is an attempt to manage a personal 'spoiled' identity and provides the grounds for atonement. On the other hand, it is an attempt to (re)write biography by elucidating the influence of the wider social context relevant to identity transformation.

Chapter six deals with the nature of subjectivity and remembering in and through archives. It extends the argument from chapter five on the role that psychological categories play in the management of everyday and institutional morality. The focus of chapter six is on issues related to the role of personal and official archives

in remembering, and on institutional morality, especially the analysis of the psychological language of documentary records of the *Securitate*, particularly language that describes people, their disposition/personality, and more generally, their 'moral character'.

Chapter seven is an exploration of the social construction of moral transgression and moral meanings - significant aspects of everyday uses of morality and the socio-communicative organization of public judgments on moral transgression. This chapter argues that rather than attempting to analyze moral (public) judgment in abstract, one must focus on everyday moral reasoning, and constructions and uses of morality in social interaction and social responses to moral transgression.

The last chapter of the book (chapter eight) advances the idea that the answers to the quandaries posed by the study of individual and collective historical redress does not lie in identifying macro- or micro-social determinants of behaviour or by embracing different models of understanding social change and transformation. I argue that discursive psychology can offer and foster a deeper and more meaningful understanding of some of these issues. I suggest that perspectives based on discourse analysis and discursive psychology are a good foundation for interdisciplinary dialogue - especially perspectives that place remembering in 'material, cultural, and historical contexts of action and interaction' (Brockmeier, 2010, p. 9) - and that they propose viable alternatives to some of the empirical quandaries of conventional transitional justice approaches. Finally, I suggest that researchers of transitional justice ought to consider archival, relational and psychosocial understandings of memory as complementary, mutually informing positions. A deeper appreciation of the role of different conceptions of memory for the different forms and manifestations of historical

redress will hopefully lead to dispelling the illusion of a linear relationship between the accumulation of 'positive' knowledge and the creation of 'shared' collective narratives. In doing so, researchers of communism and transitional justice should be able to more clearly theorize and take into account the cross-cutting possibilities and challenges of researching contested, troubled, pasts.