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*Main Article:*

## Using Psychodynamic Interaction as a Valuable Source of Information in Social Research

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### Abstract

This article will address the issue of using understandings of psychodynamic interrelations as a means to grasp how social and cultural dynamics are processed individually and collectively in narratives. I apply the two theoretically distinct concepts of inter- and intrasubjectivity to gain insight into how social and cultural dynamics are processed as subjective experiences and reflected in the interrelational space created in narrative interviews with trainee social educators. By using a combination of interactionist theory and psychosocial theory in the analysis of an interview with a student of social education, I demonstrate how the often conflicting demands and expectations are being played out in the interrelational tension between the researcher (myself) and the interviewee or narrator. In a confrontation with “inner” expectations and concerns regarding a future profession and one’s ability to cope, and the “outer” socially and culturally embedded discourses as they are played out in the objectives of self-development and education, the narrative about a forthcoming internship is filled with tension and contradiction. In this article I will demonstrate how such tensions and contradictions are valuable sources of information in understanding the process of becoming a social educator.

**Index Terms:** social research; second-order research; research framework; research method; research process; research experience; psychodynamic research; intersubjectivity; intrasubjectivity; narrative interview; relational space; professional identity

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*Author's Note.* This article is based on the research I conducted for my doctoral thesis (Schmidt, 2007) concerning the understanding of professional identity as the tension between subjectivity, work practice, and the history of the profession. A social educator (i.e., *pædagog* in Denmark) is a person qualified to work in nurseries, kindergartens, and preschools. Social educators generally work with the age group 0-6, but are also qualified for social welfare work concerning the special needs of youth and the elderly. The training is a combination of theoretical and practical education which leads to a professional qualification in the form of a bachelor's degree.

## **1. Narratives in Social Research: Introducing the “Relational Space” in Narrative Interviews**

In a research project on professional identity for students training to become social educators, I worked with psychodynamic interaction as a central part of the research design. I was interested in understanding how students of social education juggled the tension between the inner and outer dynamics of their future field of work, while they were developing a professional identity. In designing the research project it was important to me to maintain a focus on the interests and orientations of these students without losing sight of the social, political, and organisational changes in the fields of work and training for social educators. With this objective in mind, I turned to a research strategy and a theoretical framework in which the subjective experiences of students and professionals are understood in a dialectic relationship to the contemporary function and hierarchical position of the work field in focus (Salling Olesen, 2004). This meant that I needed to gain access to the students' own understanding of, and involvement in, their future work, their motivations, prior knowledge, expectations, and concerns.

In order to gain such insight, I conducted *autobiographical narrative interviews* (Schütze, 1983) with 10 students training to be social educators. In the autobiographical narrative, social and individual factors are linked to the actual conversation as well as the inner dialogue in the narrative. A narrative is understood as a form of interaction, and is shaped by the institutional frameworks as well as the social and cultural norms and values held by both narrator and listener. In this perception the narrative is a construction of both the past and the present, and the social and individual meaning of the narrative is produced in the interrelations between interviewer and interviewee. This relation is important in the narrative interview since the interviewee needs a “counterpart” who is willing to participate in both the intended and the unintended communication during an interview (Morgenroth, 2002).

To point the narrative in the direction of their motivation, perception, and involvement in their future work, I asked the students to tell me how it had come about that they were now studying to become social educators. During the narrative interview, I supported the student's narrative by making supportive remarks and asking supplementary questions in order to encourage further narrating. In this way, I lent support to the *interrelational dynamics*, allowing the interviewee to decide what was important to narrate in order to make the listener (myself as the researcher in this case) understand her motivation, expectations, and perceptions in relation to the topic. The interviewer thus becomes quite

an important figure during an interview, even though she does not seem very active in the conversation as such. This interplay between the two people involved creates a tension in which the meaning of underlying social and institutional dynamics is being played out in the relationship between the two individuals, thereby leaving traces of the researcher's own subjective involvement as well as the interviewee's involvement. This tension constitutes the path to gaining an understanding of the dynamics in the interviewee's professional identity and change of profession, which may then be used in the analytical interpretation of the interview text.

Erhard Tietel uses the term *relational space* to describe this tension, which he suggests we ought to seek in our analysis (Tietel, 2000). He argues that meaning in the interview situation is not only created in the manifest and/or concrete relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, but is also present in the hidden and often unconscious tension in the relational space of the relationship. This relational space is created in the contradictory tension of intentions which are played out during an interview. The interviewer will try to provide "space" for the interviewee's reflection outside what the interviewer views as normal or given cultural and institutional norms and rules by offering *containment* (Bion, 1974) to the interviewee. This means that the interviewer offers a space free of pressure to take action and make rational decisions regarding the narrated thoughts and events. The intention is to increase the likelihood of the interviewee opening up and giving in to the narrative flow. One might say that the goal is to create a space with no pre-understandings, in which the emotional involvement in the theme of the interview (e.g., working conditions or professional practice) can achieve both bodily and verbal expression. In this way, the interviewee's tentative reflections and fragile attempts to formulate new ideas and possibilities in working life or life in general can be aired without the pressure of having to make decisions and actual changes. The interviewer does not have to share the interviewee's cultural and institutional norms and values in order to create this space.

However, the idea of the interviewer offering containment collides with another, contradictory, dynamics within the interviewee who also (often unconsciously) tries to bring her own experience and perception of the work or professional practice into the relationship between herself and the interviewer. So while the interviewer is offering containment for new reflection and experience, the interviewee will at the same time attempt to get the interviewer involved in her own familiar institutional, structural, work-related, and training-specific dynamics. This is a parallel process where the interviewee embraces the opportunity to open up in a value-free space, but at the same time tries to transform it into a more familiar space where her reflections and decisions make sense to her. This means that she will try to add her own idea of the dynamics of the work field to the interrelational space between the two and pull the interviewer into her own perceptions of this dynamics. And the interviewer (also often unconsciously) will react to this attempt and refer to her own familiar cultural and institutional structures and values.

This contradictory dynamics of the narrative interview means that the relationship between interviewer and interviewee produces a layer of significant meaning which holds the hidden institutional, cultural, and structural dynamics of the profession. Hence, the

hidden dynamics of the profession are mirrored in this relationship. In order to access this information, one needs to address this tension within the relational space by focusing on it during the analysis in terms of theory and concepts that allow this. This interrelational tension can be understood as both inter-relation (action) and intra-relation (emotion). Both understandings are important and both imply that the researcher takes her own perception and involvement seriously. In the following, I will further examine theory that allows such attention.

## **2. Consideration of all Aspects of Action, Communication, and Emotion in the Analysis**

I will now introduce the concepts of inter- and intrasubjectivity and present the case of Lene, who is training to become a social educator and is about to embark on an internship placement for the first time. It is important to stress that the overall aim of this research is not only to pursue the hidden dynamics in the interrelation between the interviewer and the interviewee, but rather to achieve insight into how struggling with contradictions and conflict is always present in the professional identity of social educators. As I seek out the hidden dynamics, I gain an understanding of how the conflicting demands and expectations are being mirrored in this particular interrelation, which can then enhance my general understanding of the process of becoming a professional social educator.

Before I proceed with my explanation of the basis for the concepts and how I worked with them, I will now introduce Lene, her narrative and the circumstances of our meeting. This will help to frame the interrelationship established between Lene and myself during the interview.

At the time of the interview, Lene is a first-year student training to become a social educator. She is 37 years old and lives alone with her three children, 12, 11, and 5 years old. She left school at 16, and initially trained as an office clerk in a police station. However, she did not care for this type of job, and soon decided to do something different with her life. She then found a job with the national railroad company as a station manager, and managed trains for almost two years. In a continuation of this job, she then worked as a train conductor for 12-13 years, while at the same time studying for various examinations to qualify her for higher education. For several years, Lene had the intention of changing careers, but she had no idea of where to turn. After much thought, she decided that she wanted to work with people and that the training should include aspects of achieving self-knowledge and self-development. She perceived both things to be possible in training to become a social educator. While going through a divorce, she decided to apply to a college for a social education program and was accepted. Up to 30 per cent of the students accepted for such programs are mature students.

The interview with Lene was conducted in her house, in the middle of a day, when she was at home studying and her three children were at school and day care. When she met me at the door, she seemed shy and somewhat nervous, yet very excited at the same time. I had already met her at the College of Social Education, which she attended. I went there several months earlier to present my research project and make contact with students. It

had turned out that we grew up in the same village and went to the same school. She was several years older than me and my family and I had moved away many years ago, so our paths had never crossed. However, our common history seemed to have heightened her interest in my project. During the interview, Lene seemed eager to answer my questions and clearly wanted to be interviewed, although she was a little awkward in telling her own story. At the time she seemed fragile, as I sat opposite her. In my inclination to offer her containment during the interview, I felt reluctant to ask for additional details since it seemed that she would easily become embarrassed or possibly “say too much for her own good.” I was conscious of the risk of her story and our conversation breaking down, so I refrained from questioning her narrative.

Every aspect is important when working with inter- and intrasubjective relationships in the understanding of a research theme. Mechthild Bereswill states that, when working with inter- and intrasubjectivity as a source for interpretation, the researcher is attuned to paying attention to layers of information that may not be obvious but are still present and influence the empirical material, whether the researcher focuses on it or not (Bereswill, 2003). This means that in this way of interpreting an empirical text/narrative, both the subjective and objective impacts of the researcher throughout the entire research process are regarded as useful sources of information in the analytical work, and not as sources of error.

The specific challenge involving the tension between the interviewer and interviewee in researching social meaning in subjective experience is subsequently addressed by Mechthild Bereswill. She focuses on two different ways of conceptualising and comprehending the interrelation in the production of empirical data. She points to the differences between an *interactionist perspective* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Mead, 1934; Schütz, 1962/1990) and a *psychoanalytical perspective* (Leithäuser & Volmerg, 1988; Lorenzer, 1986; Morgenroth, 2002) on this issue, as well as the advantages of combining them (Bereswill, 2003). The two different perspectives both take their point of departure in the criticism of positivist tendencies to encourage distance and separation between the interviewer and interviewee in qualitative research. Both take the tension between the involved parties for granted and also hold the idea that the relationship is something one cannot control. Whether using a *biographical analysis* (Schütze, 1984) or *in-depth hermeneutical analysis* method (Leithäuser & Volmerg, 1988), it is taken for granted that the tension between acting and receiving between the people involved in an interaction such as an interview is a constantly changing process. This means that all those involved participate in the transference process and the researcher needs to accept that she is both object and subject within the empirical data production that occurs (Hunt, 1989, as cited in Bereswill, 2003). This also means that the researcher needs to find ways around the traditional (positivist) understanding of the relationship between subject and object in the production of empirical material and use this as a resource for the analysis. In the following, I will examine more closely the differences between the interactionist and psychoanalytical perspectives by describing the interaction between myself and Lene, and thereby illustrate how I have used these differences as a way to gain access to the complexity of involvement in a field of work.

### 3. Inter- and Intrasubjectivity at Work: Dealing With a Difficult Narrative

In order to show how focusing attention on inter- and intrasubjective tension in a narrative can be useful when researching the struggle with the dilemmas of professional social educator work, I will present an excerpt from my interview with Lene. When I originally worked on the analysis of this interview, I almost discarded it, because it puzzled me for a long time and I struggled with it to some extent. On the one hand, I was rather bored with it since I perceived it as not very informative. Maybe due to what I viewed as Lene's insecurity, or maybe because of my reluctance to ask for more details about the event she had chosen to talk about, I found that the interview lacked reflection and elaboration. On the other hand, I was somewhat ashamed of the interview because I felt that I had not done a very good job as an interviewer. Reading the interview as a text, I seemed disinterested and maybe even felt a certain distance. But instead of discarding the interview, I decided to delve further into the interrelational tension between the two of us in order to understand what it might tell me about Lene's way of handling the dilemmas of the professional work field she was about to enter. The rather long excerpt presented here starts from the point where Lene begins to tell me about her forthcoming internship period. This part of the interview took place at a rapid pace, which seemed out of character for her:

I: So you're going to Westtown?

No, I got that first, but then, then I was encouraged to go and talk to the internship coordinators, by my education teacher, because actually I'd have to go by car to take this place—and I did that then, but I'd already more or less prepared myself for it. Well, that's the way it was—there wasn't much to do about it, but she was aware of it, and would do all she could to find a place for me where I could kind of avoid having to get a car (yes). Then she found this one here in Windgate, or rather one in Windgate and another one in Wilbury, in an after-school centre in Wilbury, so I could choose myself. Then I chose Windgate because it was a Kindergarten, and then—about my working hours, I'd hoped it would be some reasonable hours, where I could also get home—some days myself to pick up the youngest one, right [the phone rings] (mm) [The tape recorder is turned off; Lene answers the phone].

I: It was about your internship placement.

Yes, I chose the place in Windgate—about my working hours, I hoped that I could get home kind of some early, early some days at least . . . but it turns out that, well it's pretty lousy hours, so I actually need a car anyway . . . because ehm, at first it was just one day a week I'd be able to pick up my own kid, now it's two days by public transport (no) yes. By public transport, there are two days a week I'll have time to pick up my own son—I'll have the closing shift every Friday at half past 3 (of course, that figures), I simply just think that it's (it's lousy)—yes, I reckon it is. It may be that my supervisor also has the closing shift every Friday, but I'm sure that she's been asked if she wanted it first (mm), they didn't just give it to her (mm mm). I have no morning shifts, I won't be opening any time, I think that's lousy too—If I'm going to, can, get an impression and a feeling of what it's like to be in

a Kindergarten, then I think I also need to have morning shifts . . . because if I took public transport, I'd be able to get home at half past 5, three days a week (that's late), yes, it is—and I'd talked to the internship coordinator, and, well, she urged me to, that I should talk to them about it first thing, and that's all right I guess. Well, they did say that they'll run this schedule for six months, and that makes it kind of—I'll just have to try next week when I get out there and then—see if something can be changed, and if it can't, then my internship coordinator will intervene and contact them (okay) . . . It seems a bit confusing, just at this very moment (yes, I can easily see that), yeah. But I do have a car I can borrow, and I will take advantage of that, every other week at least (mm)—So that I can make it home to pick him up four times a week . . . But Friday will always be a drag (yes). It's just a bit annoying that some place you kind of go out there with a bad attitude—and the way I am before I start, I kind of try, you know: It's going to be okay (laughs) (mm). But well—you know, I'm prepared to do it in February, then I'll stick to the plan as it is, but after that I'd like us to change it a bit, be a bit flexible (mm). I'll do my closing shifts, of course, I need them as well—but me having every Friday—that's maybe just a bit too much, when you think that people might have plans for the weekend and (yes, it doesn't sound quite fair), no . . . anyway, I think it sucks (mm). Well, we'll see (yeah).

I: But it all sounds very exciting.

(Lene interview transcript, January 2004, parenthetical remarks by the interviewer)

The first thing that strikes the reader is my response to Lene after her long and detailed account of how the various day care institutions were involved in her coming internship period and how frustrating it was and still is. “But it all sounds very exciting” is my response to her struggle! One would be fully justified in calling this an inappropriate response to this narrative about a clearly frustrating and unclear process of finding a suitable venue for the practice period in Lene's training to become a social educator. From what she says, the process must be characterised as everything but “exciting”! So why do I respond so inappropriately?

The importance of the researcher's involvement in the production of empirical data is taken for granted in both the interactionist and psychoanalytical approaches to interpretation of the underlying social meaning in the relationship between researcher and interviewee. But there are also some fundamental differences between these approaches in what one attempts to comprehend, and studying these differences is useful in trying to understand my inappropriate response, and how it might be linked to the dynamics of the work field Lene is entering. Where the interactionist approach is concerned with systematically determining the researcher's cognitive knowledge of the interrelationship, the psychoanalyst is concerned with determining the researcher's emotional involvement in the relationship that is being played out. Bereswill distinguishes between what she terms the *intersubjective relation* and the *intrasubjective relation* (Bereswill, 2003). When focusing on the intersubjective relation, the researcher focuses primarily on verbal responses to the interviewee's narrative. What does she say in response to the narrative of which event, and when does she choose to respond in which way? It is clear that the focus is very much on the text. When examining the intrasubjective relation, the

researcher is concerned with the emotional expressions in the text, both how things are being said and her own emotional response to the general interaction.

#### **4. Trying to Maintain Social Order: The Intersubjective Dramaturgy in the Narrative**

When addressing the intersubjective relation in the analysis, the researcher focuses on understanding her own social conduct in the field. Therefore, the interactionist analysis is concerned with reading the researcher's own part in what may be called the "interactive dramaturgy" played out in the text (Bereswill, 2003, with reference to Goffman, 1990). The concept of *dramaturgy* points to the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee as we "dance" around the "outer" socially and culturally embedded demands and discourses. When focusing on the "intersubjective dramaturgy" in the excerpt above, one needs to pay attention to the interchange between Lene and me. If we consider how Lene tells her story about the events leading up to the forthcoming internship, we gain a better understanding of my final remark. As Lene tells her story, she is obviously rambling and talking in disjointed sentences. From this perspective, I quite simply seem to be having difficulty in following her story. She mentions the names of several different towns and various ways of solving her problems, in addition to a number of different people involved in the process. Everything launched upon unfinished sentences and her stumbling through the course of events clearly make it difficult for me to appreciate the significance of what she is saying.

It is possible to follow my comments during her narrative by reading the text in the parentheses. I say things such as "it's lousy," "of course, that figures," "that's late," and "yes, I can easily see that." When looking closely at what I say and what comes next, it becomes evident that all these comments seem to support Lene or even urge her to keep telling her stumbling story along the path that has been laid out. However, my real intention is quite the opposite, although it does not seem so and I am probably unaware of it. In everyday conversations, responses such as these are not uncommon. They seem to reveal an understanding to the narrator. By excessive support and an underpinning of the dramatic narrative, the listener often helps the narrator to moderate or make more sense of her story by offering nuances and reflections on what is being told (see Labov, 1972, chap. 9, "The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax," for a discussion on the conventions of everyday conversations). But this convention for dialogues does not seem to work in this case and it simply becomes "too much" for me. I do not grasp the nuances in her story and when I seem unable to stop the incessant rambling, I use the first possible opportunity to stop it by saying something completely inappropriate, thereby more or less cutting Lene off.

In the interplay between Lene and me, we can see that while I try to offer containment for reflection and experiences related to her forthcoming encounter with a professional field by being supportive of what she says, she is involving me in her perceptions of a workplace and student hierarchy. She is appealing to my understanding of her frustration over not being able to decide anything for herself, because all decisions are up to supervisors and workplaces, and her appeal appears to be working! In my supportive



responses, I seem to underpin a certain understanding of the game that is being played out when internships are being allocated at the College of Social Education. It is a situation which can give rise to tension. The internship is obligatory and follows an educational logic. Any internship placement is equally relevant since the focus is on gaining practical experience, not on the organisation of the workplace, which makes sense in an educational logic. But much more is at stake for the students. They seem very aware of the difference between good and bad workplaces for training, and take into account both work content and organisation as they compete for the best places. Lene seems to have lost this competition and now she is left with a less attractive placement. She seems focused on the fact that she has to accept that her supervisor has no intention of asking her what would be in her best interest.

When telling me the course of events, Lene transfers her feeling of being treated unfairly to me by appealing to certain responses from me. In the excerpt, I seem to be listening and understanding her when I respond with the supportive comments, just as it seems that the internship coordinator is being understanding and helpful. But just as the internship coordinator does not really make any difference and in the end neglects her problems, I seem to neglect her problems as well by making my completely inappropriate response. Neither of us seems willing to address the real issue, which is her anxiety about completely losing control of the situation. Lene is simply scared about what is awaiting her, how the people at the internship placement will receive her, and how she will manage. Being scared is an emotion which is hard to control or present in a rational and structured way, even if an interviewer helps by moderating and offering nuances! By following the emotional involvement being played out in the excerpt in addition to the interrelational conduct, we achieve further insight into the impact of our interrelationship on what is being said. In the following, I will pursue the emotional interchange.

## **5. Pursuing the Cause of Irritation: The Intrasubjective Dramaturgy in the Narrative**

When applying a psychoanalytically informed analysis to the text in addition to the interactionist method, the researcher is also able to address the exposure of her own “inner dramaturgy” (Bereswill, 2003) and bring it into the analysis. Bereswill adds this concept of inner dramaturgy to Goffmann’s original interactionist concept by developing a psychoanalytical perspective on the interrelational “dance” between the interviewer and the interviewee. The focus in this analysis will thus be on the emotional involvement of myself (the researcher) in the relationship between the interviewer (me) and the interviewee (Lene). The analysis is thus concerned with the emotion held by the researcher when relating to the interaction between the people involved in the text.

As already stated, I felt quite embarrassed that I did not seem to be listening to what Lene was telling me when I brushed her off with my remark: “But it all sounds very exciting.” However, when reading through the entire interview transcript, I was also struck by a feeling of irritation, not only towards myself but most certainly towards Lene. As a result, I decided to ask myself what it was in the text that caused me to feel this way. Pursuing what Lene is talking about when I become irritated, I suggest that Lene is appealing to

contradictory roles and emotions in me, leading to my irritation. By not having a clear focus on what she wants to tell me and by talking in disjointed sentences, Lene appears fragile, and appeals to my support in maintaining her focus and keeping on the right track. I appear to do so by not stopping her from rambling or asking her confrontational questions. So what makes me do this, one might ask?

The fact that Lene is a single mother and, at age 37, she is in the process of changing careers by entering a demanding educational program might give us a hint. It is simply not politically correct to question the “mission” of a woman in her situation or to ask her whether she can cope with it all, even though I seem to sense that Lene questions it herself. Lene presents herself as a determined woman, who draws on the general discourse that reskilling through educational enhancement is a socially desirable path. Both she and I live in a society in which change and progress are generally demanded and supported. Lene is complying with this discourse by her educational enhancement and career change. In this light, one may understand my sense of being confronted with a very vulnerable woman as an appeal from Lene to me to not question her mission, but instead accept a role as the supportive counsellor or “adult.” So when I respond to her long rambling narrative about the impending internship by saying “it all sounds very exciting,” I also accept the role of the “rational adult,” thereby encouraging her to relate to the course of events in a rational and mature way.

But as previously mentioned, Lene also appeals to another feeling in me, and another role. If we consider again my responses throughout the excerpt, we notice that I generally respond in a confirmatory manner when she talks about how things seem unfair to her. I seem to support her grumbling about the problems of juggling work (for which the internship is very much a rehearsal) and family, particularly her responsibilities as a mother, in terms of the problems of picking up children from day care on time. As a mother of two children in the day-care age myself at the time of the interview, I can easily relate to this problem, not least in relation to having a guilty conscience about not picking one’s children up at a suitable time and not being able to cope. So Lene also very much appeals to my role and identity as a mother, particularly in regard to my perception of how we mothers would generally like everyone around us to adjust to and be supportive of our needs. At the risk of being put into a conflicting role, I feel irritation and maybe even boredom when I bring myself back to the incident in reading the text.

My feeling of irritation towards Lene seems very much related to the conflicting emotion that Lene arouses in me. On the one hand, I am filled with an urge to carry her because she seems so fragile, while on the other, I end up complying with her wish for me to back her up in the face of the injustice of the whole affair. These conflicting emotions in both myself and Lene are an indication of a more general subjective as well as social conflict. The tension in our interrelations is a token of Lene’s insistence on living the social discourse of being willing to adapt to a lifelong learning situation, even though this is difficult and involves inner conflict. While she seems to have directed most of her attention towards being able to adapt to social and structural changes by educating herself further, being quite successful in achieving both self-reflection and theoretical insight, she is now faced with the reality of the professional field and working life. But she is left

alone to process the contradictions that cause her anxiety. As the interviewer, I am confronted with Lene's conflict and anxiety as something I experience as my own inner conflict when I offer to contain her feelings and help her to stay in control. Much is at stake for both of us in this particular meeting, and we unconsciously decide to block the conflicts out of our conversation, addressing only practicalities and thereby *rationalising* this entire ordeal.

## **6. Conclusion: Addressing Hidden Processes and Unconscious Emotions**

Whether one uses an interactionist or a psychoanalytically oriented analytical perspective, paying attention to the interrelational dynamics in the narrative implies focusing on aspects of the interplay which are not obvious to either of the individuals involved. Neither Lene nor I am consciously aware of the interplay that occurs between us, and we are obviously not in control of our reactions towards the underlying and hidden meanings involved. However, the implications of the hidden and unconscious aspects differ in the two approaches, and they are also theorised differently.

When focusing on the intersubjective relation using interactionist theory, attention is directed towards the constitution and structure of social order and meaning through an emphasis on how we act and what we say in order to maintain what we both understand as the legitimate social order. The hidden or non-conscious aspects are understood as being marginalised for social and institutional reasons. Similarly, the individual implications of the educational logic in the distribution of internship placements during the training to become a social educator are being marginalised in order to maintain a focus on the importance of professional qualifications. By uncovering these institutional dynamics in the event of distributing the placements, one gains an insight into how Lene's identity process of becoming a professional social educator is interlinked with her consciousness of not being able to secure a desirable internship placement. Thus, by using interactionist theory to analyse the intersubjective relation between a future social educator and a (dis)interested researcher, we are not only able to describe the communication, when we pay attention to how the social order is reproduced and negotiated in the interrelationship, we also gain insight into how the interviewee relates to and struggles with the way the researcher (re)presents the social order of the professional field in question. While Lene talks about the upcoming internship, I seem to completely neglect her description of her struggle with the organisational structure and the unsupportive supervisor, since I do not consider it important. In our intersubjective relationship, Lene shows her struggle with having to accept the disregard for her personal hopes and expectations for her professional career as she forces me to support her.

With a focus on the intrasubjective relations from a psychoanalytically oriented theoretical perspective, our attention is directed to how conflicts and dilemmas in the constitution of social meaning are negotiated in the communication, internalised in subjective relations, and played out in the emotional interrelationship between those involved. Within this understanding is a basic assumption that conflicts and dilemmas are a fundamental part of being in a society and interacting with it, but are often blocked out of our consciousness. The intrasubjective relation between Lene and me reveals her

attempt to involve me in her struggle with her unfair or even humiliating treatment by appealing to my understanding. I seem to accept her appeal, but at the same time I myself struggle with the unacceptable feeling of wanting to disregard her. An unconscious inner conflict such as mine may be more or less articulated in a variety of interrelations, but is always present. As this analysis reveals, my feelings are being articulated unconsciously as an emotional involvement of both understanding and rejection. By using psychoanalytical theory to analyse our intrarelations, it becomes apparent that Lene's insistence on living up to the formal norms of being willing to adapt to the political discourse of educating oneself further, as well as being involved in self-development and not being prevented by single parenting, divorce, or anything else, is an emotional challenge without any easy solution. Being determined to grasp the opportunities available, Lene is struggling with the contradictory demands of striving to be part of the "winning team." Though I react with boredom, irritation, and support, I also give in to my own urge to rationalise the entire ordeal in order to not lose control myself. The psychoanalytical perspective reveals how conflicting emotions are precluded from a society where rationalisation is generally demanded, although the inner conflicts remain.

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