Five Theories in Social Work

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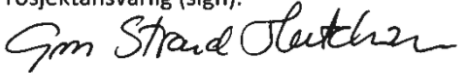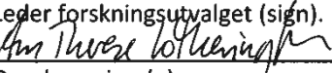
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Summary The report is structured around five major groups of theories for social work: Psychodynamic Theories, Interactional Theories, Learning Theories, Conflict Theories, and System Theories. It provides insights into the influence on social work today of central thinkers in psychology and social science including Freud, Marx, Mead, Goffman, Mead and Bronfenbrenner as well as the influence of influential social workers such as Jane Addams, Mary Richmond and Helen Harris Perlman.	Keywords: Social Work Theories in Social Work Psychodynamic Theories in Social Work Interactionist Theories in Social Work Learning theories in Social Work Conflict theories in Social Work System theories in Social work	
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Preface to "Five Theories in Social Work"

By Karen Healy, Professor of Social Work, University of Queensland

A defining characteristic of a profession is the development of a systematic and specialized body of knowledge that enables the profession's members to serve their clients and the public. In this book, Five Theories in Social Work, Siv Oltedal and Gunn Strand Hutchison articulate the theoretical foundations of contemporary social work practice. This work makes a vital contribution to understanding the intellectual foundations of the social work profession.

Like many professions, social work draws on received ideas from social and human science disciplines. The book is structured around five major theoretical perspectives for social work, these are: Psychodynamic Theory, Interactional Theory, Learning Theory, Conflict Theory, and Systems Theories. Oltedal and Hutchinson provide informative insights into the influence of towering thinkers in psychology and social sciences including Freud, Marx, Mead, Goffman, Mead and Bronfenbrenner as well as the influence of influential social workers such as Jane Addams, Mary Richmond and Helen Harris Perlman on social work today. Oltedal and Hutchinson show how the work of these pioneers is drawn on and creatively adapted in diverse contexts of social work practice. The authors also consider how different theoretical frameworks give rise to specific practice approaches and possibilities. For example, in this book we learn how conflict traditions have given rise to certain possibilities for community work practice and how systems perspectives have supported developments in family work methods.

As is now widely recognized, social work is a contextually diverse profession. The nature of social work practice, and hence what it means to be a social worker, differs markedly across historical, geographical and institutional contexts as well as domains of practice. Oltedal and Hutchinson recognize this contextual diversity in their model of social work practice in its societal and social-political context. A unique feature of the book is its consideration of social work practices in Nordic contexts and, in particular, in the Norwegian context. Aspects of Norwegian society particularly the importance of local communities as sources of social support and, occasionally, as sites of social exclusion are discussed. This context is vital to Norwegian social workers and is also of great interest to social workers

internationally as we seek to understand the commonalities, differences and possibilities of social work in diverse contexts.

This book provides a vital understanding of our foundations as a profession as we look to an uncertain future. Oltedal and Hutchinson acknowledge the extensive and concerning encroachment of neo-liberal ideologies and free market ideas on social work practices today and into the future. Our profession has always struggled with understanding, adapting to, and sometimes challenging the environments within which we practice. We undertake these struggles not in our own personal or professional interests but rather in the interests of the people with whom we work. We continue to advocate for recognition of the centrality of values of respect and social justice in the institutions where we practice and for the value of partnerships between social workers and the people we serve. A sound understanding of our professional theory base is an essential resource in our continuing struggles for better services for people suffering from, or vulnerable to, social exclusion and in our advocacy for more just societies. In this book, Oltedal and Hutchinson show us that the theoretical base of our practice has deep roots in the work on pioneering thinkers in the social and human sciences and of theorists from within the discipline of social work. This is an essential foundation on which we can proudly draw as we creatively evolve our practices in the face of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Chapter 1:
The Dynamics in the Development of Social Work Theories

Introduction

A social worker's professional knowledge is formed in the dynamic between institutional construction, social problems and the tradition within the social work discipline. Social work is, in equal parts, a research area, a teaching subject and a field of practice. The field of practice represents the foundation for research and education. The goal of social work is to improve the living conditions of the client and to stimulate the client's own effort. Social work is practiced at the meeting point between the individual and society. The work is systemic, value-based and holistically orientated. It is characterized by face-to-face interactions.

Over time, theoretical perspectives from psychology, philosophy and sociology have been added to the discipline and adapted to the field of social work. These theories represent ideas about concepts, which enable us both to understand and to act. However, in social work literature there is not much focus on these concepts nor on the understanding that they represent. In this book we want to highlight the theoretical roots of five perspectives used in social work. Further, we will show how their use has developed, and how models of actions and practice in social work are currently understood.

When looking at the different theoretical perspectives, we have followed the professional distinctions between the fields of sociology and psychology, and we have tried to adapt this division into the field of social work. The distinctions between theories are also problematic because different writers define them differently.

As teachers in social work we have a specific perspective and our main focus is the area of teaching. Our perspective often includes theory, models and ideology, and it can be broad or narrow.

If we follow the criteria for scientific theory, we have to consider the following:

'A scientific theory is made so that because of it, or in combination with other theories, we can develop specific hypotheses that can be tried against experience' (translated from Gilje and Grimen 1993: 15).Theories are less general than perspectives. A theory is an organized set of general claims about the connections that exist within a smaller or larger part of existence (Elster 1981). We can point to areas where theory is relevant, but in social sciences it is hard to say that it can be applied in every context or situation. We also have to be able to disprove a theory, argue against it and explain where it is not valid. A minimum claim to scientific theories is that there must be experiences that can contradict the theory (ibid: 18).

Using a theory, we can deduce or infer connections and formulate those into a model, which can then be used to explain the more specific situation of a case in the area covered by that theory (Elster 1981). There is a dialectical relationship between theories and models. Models are necessary to explain something in a more precise way, and theories are necessary to make good models. A model schematizes and simplifies. A model works between theory and practice. *'Five Theories within Social Work'* comprises an understanding of problems and their context, as well as more action-orientated recommendations for how to carry out the work.

The five different theories of practice and models of understanding and action that will be discussed are: Psychodynamic, Interactional, Learning, Conflict, and Systems theories. We shall also discuss specific models and theories in social work that have their origin in psychology, sociology and philosophy. There is a link between models of understanding and models of action because there cannot be actions without a form of understanding. In the same way, it is useless to talk about understanding and theory in social work without linking it to action and social work practice. The understanding of contexts and relations guides us as social workers in the questions we ask, the connections we see and the way we work to deal with the problems. Professional development in the field of social work would benefit from social workers being more conscious of which models they are using or identifying with. This would lead to an increased level of reflection. As professional social workers we can use theories and models to question our practice as well as to see other possibilities. We can use them as tools in reflection about our own practice, and can become more aware of the

limitations in the models we use. This can hone individual professional development and contribute to the debate about what constitutes good social work.

What are the characteristics of social work as a discipline?

Work in the practice field – the point of intersection between the individual and society

Social work is a discipline which has been influenced by psychology and sociology to a great extent. In general, it can be said that sociology is focused on society and human psychology, while social work concerns the human being *in* society. Social workers practice at the intersection between the individual and the society. During their training, it is important that personal competence is developed for this work, and supervised practice is one method of helping the social work student to use the theoretical subjects for his or her personal development.

The various models and theories place the focus differently with regard to the individual and society. Psychodynamic, Learning theory, and Interactional models all focus on the individual and their relationships with those closest to them. Society plays a role but is diffuse. Models within Systems and Conflict theories, on the other hand, have their focus at a systemic and societal level and emphasize the important influence these conditions have on groups' and individuals' living situations.

Systematics and working process

Another characteristic of social work is that the work is systematic and goal oriented. The optimal role of the social worker is to contribute to an improvement in the living situation of the user, halt any decline in that situation and prevent the recurrence of such negative circumstances. A social worker intervenes in a goal-oriented and planned manner instead of letting things just happen by themselves. The work is structured in a specific way.

Time is important in social work. It matters in different ways if working in a therapeutic context where the contact continues over a long period, or if there is a shorter, more case-oriented interaction, for example in a social security office. The work can be divided into phases, both in the short-term and the long-term.

The work process includes start, middle and closing phases. In this work, interaction, goals and problems are all crucial parts of a systematic working process. Different models give different weighting to aspects of the systematic work; influenced by, for example, whether the focus is mainly on the interaction or on the goal itself. As a result, what will take place within in each phase will also vary.

A holistic approach to social work

Holistic social work is striving to get the broadest possible understanding of the client's situation and what is creating the problems. The work is then directed towards preventing and redressing these problems.

It can be challenging to deal with all that is expressed by the client and to pay close attention to the professional, supportive relationship. To achieve the widest holistic understanding possible, the social worker needs to be engaged, to use his or her own intuition and whole self in the situation, rather than taking an analytical and detached stance.

This does not mean that the individual social worker must always work with every presenting problem. Cooperation and teamwork with others are often necessary to prevent and redress problems, and in holistic social work many professions are involved. The social worker is also a conduit for the political and administrative systems. Information has to be expressed in such a way that it enables those who are politically responsible to make informed decisions about providing services and creating reasonable living conditions for the population. The social worker also has to cooperate with clients, special interest organisations and charities to prevent and address problems. To assure that the work is genuinely holistic, cooperative competence is crucial.

Using a combination of various models which focus on different issues at the micro or macro level is often useful for operating as holistically as possible.

Value-based social work

Social work can be described as a more practically-oriented discipline than, for example, sociology. It follows that the practitioner has a special interest at heart.

The special interest of social workers is to improve the client's life situation or to reduce social problems at individual and societal level. A social worker is, then, working to reduce the problems of his or her clients that are a consequence of their shortage of material resources and/or problems in relation to other people or institutions in society.

Ethical reflection is important in social work. Again, the difference between sociology and social work can be used to highlight the action-oriented and therefore value-oriented character of social work, compared to sociology, which is not work in practice, but a way to understand society (Berger 1967). Scientific objectivity is a special structure of relevance which one can 'connect to' (Berger and Kellner 1982: 54). In social work, it is not enough to behave critically or be reflective about the situation. Social workers have to be considerate of the people they are dealing with face to face. Neither can they put their own values to one side. Social workers have to make choices, and their own values will affect these choices, even though they have to base their work on the set of values for social work.

Some important values for a social worker when he or she meets a client (cf. Compton and Galaway 1984: 68) are:

• The client is a unique person. Respect for the client as a human being is crucial.

• The client is free to make his or her own choices. Respect for a client's self-determination is important.

Professional ethics, as outlined by social workers' professional- and trade-organisations, are to guide the social workers in their practice and to present the profession to the outside world. At the congress of FO (the joint organization for child welfare officers, social workers and social health workers in Norway) in November 2002, it was decided to have a set of shared professional ethical principles for all three trade organizations in FO.

Although there is a common foundation of professional values and shared ethical principles in social work, the various models in this book present different

opinions about the human being and about the relationship between the individual and society.

Face-to-face relations

The social worker works with people. Knowledge of relations – relational competence – is strongly emphasised in the literature about social work, and it is practiced and cultivated together with the client. Through meeting the client, the social worker gets more information about the client's situation and has to respond to multiple aspects of him or her. The social worker is not only responding to the case itself, but also to the client's emotions about his or her own situation, about the interaction with the social worker, and about the institution the social worker represents. The social worker has to learn to share his or her knowledge with the client and be open to the insight that the client brings to the interaction. Communication is therefore essential in social work.

Relational skills and competence develop together with the client. For example, the client shows relational insight when he or she provides information seen as relevant in an application for social welfare. The client's relational insight is thus influencing the casework understanding that the social worker is giving through a discretionary evaluation.

The development of models in social work practice

Social work in a social and welfare political context

To show the dynamic context within which social work is developing, we have made an analytical model (Figure 1). The model can be used for analysis at various levels by looking at the separate parts or the connection between them (See figure 1).

Figure 1: Social Work in a Societal and Social-Political Context.
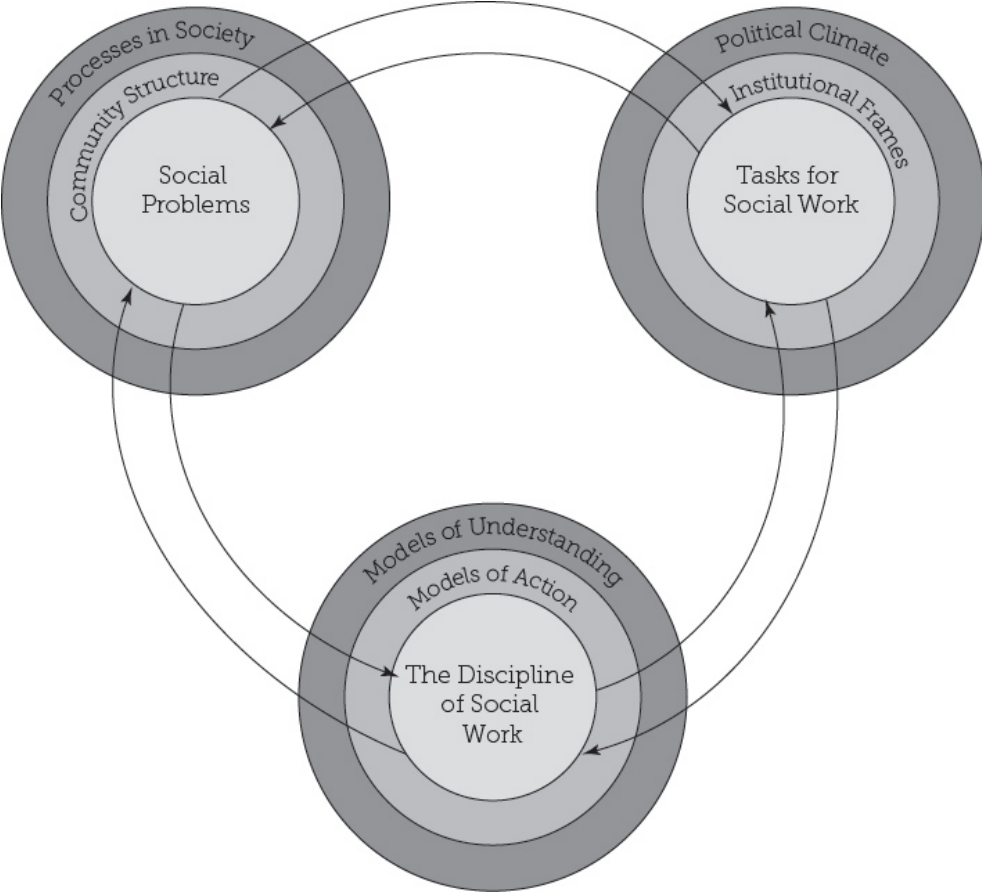
When looking into each of the circles, it can be used as a tool to understand how the political climate and economic fluctuations are having an impact on social politics and the shaping of institutions, which again leads to 'tasks for social work'. For example, it can be seen how new liberalism is influencing social politics to organise welfare at an individual level to assure it reaches 'the ones really in need'. The institutions and the working methods are created with this in sight. This again puts further pressure on the social workers to monitor very closely who is being allocated access to services.

Later in this chapter we will review which 'social problems' triggered professional social work, and we will then use this model to analyse the context from which these problems stem. Likewise, we will show how the discipline "social work" developed in relation to society and social political conditions overall. And the focus of this book is exactly that: to make visible and understand the growth and development of different models in social work.

It is also possible to use the model, Figure 1, to look at the reciprocal influences between the three parts, and one can choose which level one would like to focus at. If focusing on the inner circles, the reciprocal influences between social problems, institutional tasks and the discipline itself can be seen. And if having the outer circles in the model as the starting point, the connection between the processes in society, political climate and models of understanding will be the focus.

In the 1960s and 1970s for example, the attention was focused on the issue of trying to improve living standards for everyone, and whether economic growth was the way to go. Both the political climate and models of understanding influenced how social processes and the relation with social problems were viewed. The political climate also influenced the practice theories in social work. From being focused on understanding reasons within the individual, or the close interaction between human beings, the focus was now shifted towards social conditions. Conflict theories had a strong influence on social work in this period. The professional attention to such connections contributed to the strengthening of a political climate critical of established truths.

If we have as a goal to find the absolute roots of the discipline of social work and follow these back to the absolute beginning, it is nearly an impossible project. We have therefore chosen to start the history with the origin of the first social work colleges in the US and Europe. It's a 'natural' place to start as the purpose of this book is the focus on theoretical models in social work.

We do not intend to provide a complete historical overview of the discipline. Rather, we will show how the theoretical influences entered the discipline at different times. We also use the model in Figure 1 to understand the context in which this happened. This leads us to raise the following questions: How can it be

explained that this theory gained entry during this period in social work? Which conditions concerning the discipline itself can shed light on this? Which social 'problems' existed in this period? How might the political answers to those problems have influenced which models were being incorporated into the discipline?

The beginning of the 1900s: the professionalization of social work

The fundamental changes that industrialization and the capitalist economic system brought with them also affected social structures; the way of structuring or organizing society. Industrialization led to people settling in cities. The cities became overpopulated and, without the possibility of getting food from a barter economy, many people experienced destitution. A description of the resulting situation for the individual, which many of us are told as a story early in life, is the fairytale of *The Little Match Girl* by H.C. Andersen. Through the story of the little girl and her situation we become intimate with the inhumane face of poverty. We are also made closely aware of the society around her, and the huge contrasts between the people 'inside' and those 'outside'. Some of the roots in the discipline of social work can be seen in the voluntary work that attempted to improve the situation for this little girl and her like at the end of the nineteenth century. Much of the pioneering precursor to the profession of social work is here, in the 'volunteer' work of women, based on humane warmth and care for people experiencing destitution.

Norway was relatively late in its industrialization, and a sparse settlement was maintained, with a barter economy that was still crucial for many people. The low population was also a factor, and the cities were not as large as those in other European countries or in the US. However, there were still changes in settlement structures, family structures and dependency on work income. Industrialization started in the 1850s in Norway. Machinery techniques were being introduced in the craft industry and factories were being built.

In the industrialized world, liberalism was leading the ground in economic thinking. Free competition and protection of ownership rights were seen as pivotal in development. Poverty was regarded as a consequence of immorality, and support schemes were only directed towards the 'deserving' poor. This view of poverty was also dominant in Norway. In the Law of Poor Relief Fund of 1845

the public-elected commissions for the poor relief were imposed to ensure an existence minimum for the 'complete helpless'. The poor relief fund was based on a strict means test, and was intended to cover only the most basic needs. It was also meant to have a deterrent effect, in order to avoid misuse. In 1863 the Law was revised and made even more restrictive with regard to the selection of the 'worthy needy'. The Law of Poor Relief in 1896 stated that the door to the office of the poor relief fund should bear the inscription (translated from Kluge 1973: 48); 'For those who have had to let go of hope'.

In Norway Law of Poor Relief was to be put into effect by the boards for poor relief, each consisting of a priest, a member of the town/city council or a police officer, and as many women and men as the local council decided. Most people received financial support or vouchers whilst still living in their own home. However, children from poor families were often fostered out. Others were placed in institutions for poor people of all ages (Kluge 1973).

During this period, the first educational institutions for social workers were established in the largest cities in the USA and Europe. Social work was now seen as a profession with a formal education in which knowledge and skills were structured in systems. In Norway, however, it took another couple of decades before social work was professionalized.

There were two main traditions: one with its roots in work with the individual and the relief of suffering; the other that also focused on the prevention of poverty. The USA has been especially influential for the development of the discipline Social Work in Norway. Mary Richmond, who is seen as the founder of good social work (case work), published *Social Diagnosis* in 1917. The two central topics there were:

• Clients and their problems have to be personalized, that is each individual has to be seen as unique and not treated as a category.

• Good social work (casework) requires thorough diagnosis.

She was adamant that all 'facts' in a case had to be studied thoroughly in regard to the environment, economy, the individual and family. Then the diagnosis should be made and the action directed towards the individual to achieve a

change. Richmond defined work that was intended to make changes in society as an area outside that of social work. Casework was soon formed so that it made the foundation for what later would be called "the diagnostic tradition" in social work, and which became dominant over the next 50 years in the discipline (Barber 1991).

The pioneering American, Jane Addams, focused more on prevention and was interested in the function of social work in society. Addams was a central figure in the establishment of Hull-House, a centre for social assistance in Chicago in 1889. The centre was a part of the settlement movement, in which the reasons for the social problems were believed to be closely connected to the social conditions in society. This tradition, of which Addams was a principal advocate, bore links to the Chicago school in sociology (later known for symbolic interactionism, where Margaret Mead's theories, among others, are central).

Addams did not have the same influence on the discipline as Richmond did. She emphasized an understanding for how it feels to be poor and to receive assistance, and she stressed how it was possible to mobilize people's own resources. The lines from Addams can be drawn through Conflict, Interactional and partly Cognitive- behavioral theoretical models, and forward to an emphasis on how to support the individual and groups to do something themselves about their situation. She was skeptical of the professionalizing of social work.

Richmond wrote more methodically about the work process and how one should act systematically and thoroughly. The work directed towards the individual soon gained precedence. Casework dominated social work in this period and soon became linked to psychodynamic theory.

Around 1920: Casework is dominated by Psychodynamic theory

At the start of the 1920s, the new sciences such as psychology and sociology were flourishing. The ideals of science were dominant and influenced the development of these emerging disciplines. In the USA and some countries in Europe, social work had become a paid profession with a formal training. Methodical work was developed in regard to casework, but the discipline was in search of theoretical strengthening. By around 1920 this was being drawn from the field of psychology and, specifically, from psychodynamic theory.

From the turn of the century Sigmund Freud had been publishing his works, and in the classical psychodynamic theory he developed, the unconscious processes are the focal point for understanding the individual's development, psychological disorder and social functioning. After the First World War there was a demand for social workers to work with those injured in the war. Thus social workers met people who were struggling with psychological disorders; poverty was not necessarily the primary problem, and psychodynamic theory was useful in the work. In Norway the Norwegian Women's National Council's Social College was established in 1920, providing a one year 'social course'. Subjects such as history, hygiene, psychology, economy, sociology, and clerical work were taught (Ulstein 1990). In 1950 the first two year course of education of social workers started at Norway's Civic and Social Work College. It aspired to educate professionals who could be used in administration, implementation and management of the various welfare arrangements that were being built up in the post-war period in Norway. In social politics there was a strong belief that social problems could be prevented, first and foremost, by general welfare arrangements, but also that safety nets needed to be in place for all those who did not fit within the arrangements directed towards 'everybody'.

The high level of professional competence in the new social worker training was to have at its core the knowledge and skills needed for social assessment and public administration. Many of the subjects that made up the degree course were taught by teachers who had been drawn from areas within administration. The Norwegian roots were in the social political development that had previously taken place. Tutvedt (1990), who was a student himself from 1955, writes that social work constituted just a small part of the education at that time. He says the following about social work as a discipline:

'The first term used for the discipline was social welfare officer. It showed that this type of work was connected to a set function, namely the work of a social curator at a hospital or another medical institution. In broad terms social work was seen as working in the social sector. But there was no requirement that a person should have a professional education or work according to a special method (p.84).'

In this first period, from the introduction of the of the two year course in 1950 until the implementation of the Law of Social Welfare in 1965, many of the graduates went to work in hospitals. However, the demand for social workers was not great (Lund 1963). Bernt Lund, who had been inspired by a study tour to the USA, was central in the development of social work education in its first decades. In 1963 he wrote a report for the Church and Education Department: The education of social workers in Norway. An account and suggestions. He suggested strengthening social work as a discipline, and advised that it should include social work for individuals, social group work and social planning and administration. He also suggested that the percentage of social work in relation to other disciplines should increase to 27 % from its previous 10 %. The administrative tradition which had held a central position in the training was now being challenged by the focus on social treatment.

Individual social work or casework had already had a position from the early years, and a few years later social group work entered the field. Both were imported from the US and, to a lesser degree, from England. Administrative work and planning had held a natural place from the outset. The new emphasis on treatment and on the strengthening of individual social work and group work, received support from many, but some were skeptical of this change. Amongst them was Liv Kluge (Kuratoren nr 3, 1963). She agrees that it is important to learn methods in social work in the training, but argues that the weakness of the American model is that its focus is so much on the methods that the wrongs of one's own society go unnoticed.

One problem that emerged was where to recruit the social work teachers from. Because it was a new discipline in Norway, there was no such group of professionals established in the welfare services. The 'solution' came with 'the America boat' as many called it. To a large extent, teachers in social work came from the numbers of Norwegian men and women who had studied social work in the US. They brought with them to the Norwegian Social Work Colleges a discipline that had its origins in American society, its value system and its social political context. Since many of the large and extensive processes in society had an impact both in the US and Europe, albeit with some different effects due to societies' dissimilarities, the breeding ground was not totally different. The institutionalized social politics in Norway after 1945 were to a great extent built

on providing general basic arrangements or services to all who met certain conditions, without any additional means testing. In the US the welfare arrangements were basically built on means testing. Private organisations, and not the government, were the ones administering important social institutions.

The casework tradition in the 1950 and 1960s was heavily influenced by psychodynamic theory and this had an effect on both thinking and action. It involved a strong focus and emphasis on the psychological processes within the individual. The first trained social workers in Norway worked in institutions that allowed great professional freedom and social workers had few controlling responsibilities on behalf of the public. This was the case in the field of child psychiatry where the influence from the US was especially evident. The clients here were to a great extent adjusted to the therapists' work models and understanding of problems, and the institutions could themselves choose whom they wanted to treat and who did not fit in (Christiansen 1990).

Casework was translated into 'individual social work' or 'work with individuals and families' in Norwegian. Since casework was heavily influenced by psychodynamic theory, the same theoretical foundation was also being tied to individual work in Norway. This influence could also have derived from the psychiatric institutions in which the social workers were working. In the field of psychology, the psychodynamic theory was dominant. It was adapted to social work and it was made a part of the discipline. Hardly any other theory has had more impact on social work.

Around 1970: Conflict theory and learning theories are linked to social work

In the early 1970s the tradition of treatment in social work was strongly criticized. The core of the challenge was directed towards the individualizing of problems by searching for reasons related to individual conditions. The consequent help was directed towards changes in the individual, and the criticism was that the connection between individual problems and the more profound social processes and structures were concealed. This criticism can partly be seen in the light of the contemporary political climate. It can also, in part, be linked to the relatively deep political differences between Norwegian and American society that were being

mirrored in the outline of the welfare state. The psychodynamic models were also criticized for being retrospective and not sufficiently goal-oriented.

Following the implementation of the Law of Social Welfare in1964 there began a 'rush' of trained social workers to the social security offices. Gradually, new degrees were developed and in 1974 the Institute of Social Work at the University in Trondheim was established. It was now possible to undertake a Masters Degree in Social Work, and there were improved conditions for research in the discipline.

At the same time, from the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, there was a radicalization of the political climate that influenced the field of social work. Many established truths were being questioned, and social political arrangements that had been built in post-war Norway were being challenged: Was it really true that differences were being reduced through these arrangements, or was it rather that the arrangements led people to being suppressed and just maintained those differences? Did the methods in social work hamper people or did they lead to the empowering and strengthening of the clients?

In the social political context, there was a growing realization throughout the 1960s that improvement of living standards and a strengthening of general welfare arrangements, combined with a rapid economic growth, could not eliminate all social problems. Rather, it seemed that the social problems were growing. It was also recognized that the rapid changes, which were a consequence of economic growth, instigated social problems. Trygve Bratteli described the situation as follows in the National Meeting of the Labour Party in 1965 (translated from the Protocol of the National Meeting, page 147):

> 'Modern society – increasingly influenced by science and technology – seems to have reached a completely new form of development. What is characteristic of this form of development is precisely the profound changes that are happening in a rapid tempo. It is creating a dynamic society with previously unknown possibilities. But at the same time, the fast transformations in peoples' existence will lead to unrest and uncertainty, and to considerable business, political and social problems.'

This scrutiny of established truths was not only a phenomenon in Norway. It was happening all around the world. The Vietnam War contributed to people,

especially young people, joining together in a collective fight against suppression and injustice. The spotlight being turned on social work in Norway was also illuminating the discipline outside the country's borders. These are important aspects for understanding that social work was now responsive to other theoretical platforms. This, in addition to the discipline's own development, opened up the way for cognitive behavioral theories and conflict theories being linked to the discipline.

In social work, conflict models with roots in Marxist theory were now being used to understand causal connections at a macro level, as well as conflicts of interest and the effects on the individual (at micro level) of being in positions of powerlessness. In this period, community work was being introduced to the discipline, as a reaction to the view that social problems were caused only by individual reasons. Conflict theory was used to analyze social development and the conflict of interests in society. Through community work, social workers should now work to mobilize groups, organizations and the local community to activity, to interaction and to changing the conditions that create, reinforce or uphold social problems at individual level.

Learning theories focuses on how behavior is learned by the individual interacting with the environment. The theories made it possible to be less retrospective than had the psychodynamic approaches, and to become more goal and action oriented. However, the fact that social work now welcomed both cognitive-behavioral theories and conflict theory did not transform it into something completely new or different. These processes happened through gradual adaptation. Also, the psychodynamic-oriented models that have been adapted for social work had always been less retrospective and more action-oriented than the pure form used in classical psychoanalysis. Thus, learning theories can be seen as a timely influence on a practice that found it increasingly difficult to relate to psychodynamic theory.

The forerunners of social work, within the settlement movement, and the early research in sociology had already linked social problems to social processes and structures and proposed that action ought to be directed not only towards the individual or groups, but also towards society. Conflict theory provided a

foundation for understanding these contexts, and community work became the method for the consequent action.

Throughout the 1970s the relationship between the different traditions and movements, which partly had their foundation in different social institutions, came to a head (Christiansen 1990). The treatment tradition was strongest within the psychiatric institutions, the family welfare offices and the 'pure' treatment institutions, where relationships were emphasized. Through the relationship between the social worker and the client, understanding, acceptance, insights and support were built. These could lead to changes in behavior and /or in the way the client experienced the situation. This approach was very much tied to psychodynamic way of thinking and acting.

The group of administrators, who were mainly employed within social services, was expected to implement the Law of Social Welfare, which led to social work undertaking control operations as well as advising and counseling. Giving help was seen as difficult when social workers must also assist the client in different ways such as, as for example, controlling a fair distribution of material benefits. The relationship between these two roles in social work has been a central topic in social work literature since the late 1970s (Guttormsen and Høigård 1978, Ranger 1986, Oltedal 1988, Terum 1995). Functional tasks like the distribution of financial social support can be seen as administrative role, and much of the social workers' time has been used to administer the financial social security benefits.

Another aspect of the work at social security offices was that the social workers, especially in the smaller municipalities, met the clients in their local environment and could not overlook the importance of the local community when striving for improving the client's living conditions. At the social security offices, community workers had the greatest support, even though only a limited amount of community work was being performed. The method was certainly important as it challenged the treatment -oriented tradition and opened up for increased social scientific understanding. Furthermore, community work demonstrated that it is possible using action-oriented methods in social work without focusing only on individual change.

The untraditional methods of community work made it difficult for the established civil services to accept it. To test out the approach, it was often applied to specific tasks and set as projects over a limited period of time. In this way community work also contributed to the development of project work.

Community work also led to social workers moving out of the offices and establishing services that were accessible, outside the administrative centers. The creation of outreach offices for social security and other services such as Probation services can be seen in this context.

Although they were not expressed as clear or marked professional distinctions, there were ideological, theoretical and methodological dividing lines between the so-called administrative social workers on the one hand, and the treatment-oriented social workers on the other. The 1970s can be described as a period of conflict in social work, to which theoretical orientation contributed.

Around 1980: Systems theory starts influencing social work

Throughout the 1980s, a growing fellowship between the treatment and the administrative- traditions developed. The institutions' framework was also changed slightly, with a greater connection to the client's daily reality and practical problems. At the social security offices, methods and knowledge from relationship-based work became more and more popular. Systems theory entered as a connecting theory which could provide the tools to grasp larger parts of the whole, both in understanding and in action.

Pincus and Minahan (1973) and Compton and Galaway (1984) became required reading in the curriculum at the social work colleges. Once more America came to the rescue, this time in the form of several books based on systems theory which became part of the syllabus at the social work colleges. Systems theory got a foothold within several disciplines such as psychology, sociology and biology. This made teamwork easier. Systems theory contributed to the gathering and viewing of details into a whole. There was a strong demand for a theory that could assist in viewing the big picture, to view the human being as part of various contexts and systems. Towards the end of the 1980s there was considerable consensus that holistic thinking ought to be the characteristic of social work. Knowledge from various traditions was now to be shared and united. Another direction

within systems theory introduced family therapy into the field of psychiatry. The individual and the individual's problems were now being seen in relation to the family as a whole.

In sociology, systems theory is linked to functionalism. In functionalism, the focus is on the way in which actions perform a function in society and avoid conflicts, maintaining harmony and balance. Problems in individuals or in groups are seen as a sign of illness. Systems theory in social work examines which systems are not working, and can give direction for methodical work to bring those systems into balance again.

The 1970s brought the first large crises in the world economy in the post-war period (with deficits in balance of payment and in public finance, inflation, and increasing unemployment rates, came in. In Norway, however, the effect of this crisis did not come as quickly because of the revenue from the oil industry. And a higher unemployment rate was not seen until 1983–84. Because of the large tax income from the oil industry, it was possible to expand the public sector and provide support to private industries. This supported the employment rate during a period where the private financial sector had little growth.

By the 1970s there was a social political acceptance of the rapid changes that the economic growth entailed. The changes had consequences that contributed to creating social problems among individuals and groups. Throughout the 1970s there were attempts to ameliorate these negative consequences by strengthening the initiatives and services. In the 1980s, and with an increasing unemployment rate, this line was partly renounced. It was well known that many of the changes due to the economic growth were causing both social and environmental problems, but the prevailing social political attitude can be summarized as follows: Even though we know the reasons, it is too late to turn around. Who wants to be back in the 50s? We cannot afford any longer to try to redistribute or even out the differences. We have to accept greater degrees of difference. The ones who really are in big trouble we will continue to help, but the general welfare benefits have to be reduced. People have to be better at solving their own problems. The public services must cooperate more with people themselves, organizations and the private sector to fulfill welfare responsibilities. Not 'everything' can be solved by the government or professionals.

In the same period there were many social political reforms related to the decentralization of responsibility for welfare services. These were implemented throughout the 1980s. The government gave increasing responsibilities to the county municipalities were, and especially the primary municipalities. Within the health and social welfare sector, the primary municipalities became responsible for the fundamental and most important services related to welfare, treatment, care and training.

Politically, the period from the beginning of the 1980s can be described as a period where new liberalistic thinking received approval. The individual's responsibility for his or her own problems was emphasised, and cost and effectiveness were accepted as the governing factors within health and social services. Means testing can also be seen in relation to this new, liberalistic ideology.

From the beginning of the 1980s, systems theory has influenced social work to a great extent. It served to assist in the effort to be holistic and depoliticizing after the discipline's focus on societies and political processes in the 1970s. Systems theory also worked in a unifying way after the conflict between different professional traditions. By making room for various approaches, systems theory models endeavored to bring holistic thinking into social work.

Around 1990: Interactional theory is blooming again

From the beginning of the 1990s more and more people started questioning if it really was possible to have a holistic view in understanding as well as in action. In this period we can see that the interactional theory's perspective has aroused increased interest in relation to social work. At Masters Degree level in social work studies, interactionism is one of the perspectives being taught and many textbooks with this approach appeared in the 1990s (Shulman 1992, Levin and Trost 1996).

Interactional models can link the tradition in social work back to what happened at the beginning of the last century, when Jane Addams was a representative for this orientation. It could even be said that social work always had this perspective within it, but that it was not easily accessible and was seldom expressed. In the social work tradition there is an orientation toward micro situations. The view of

the individual as a subject acting and searching for meaning is central. Both symbolic interactionism and phenomenology can be related to the models used in social work.

In the social political climate, the new liberalistic movement continued. It became, and still is, an increasing pressure on reducing governmental expenses. A theory that focuses on the individual's understanding and interpretation will be readily welcomed. The political dividing lines are no longer the same. The Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet) has stated, with great credibility, that political parties previously placed in the centre and to the left have 'stolen their clothes'. Competition and privatization of fundamental welfare services, for example caring services, are frequently discussed and being attempted in some municipalities.

From 1st January 1996 all tertiary education, that is universities and university colleges, have had a new law they have had to adhere to. One of the consequences of recent years of educational politics is a greater emphasis on research in the Social Colleges. Another is more collaboration across the departments. The new organizational structure has also led to social work education being adapted towards the university system in Norway, which again has led to increased emphasis on the theoretical foundation of the training. The discussion about what type of knowledge we need in the so-called 'welfare professions' and how this knowledge production is to be undertaken is on the agenda today and is likely to continue and be given even more weight in the years to come.

Chapter 2:
Psychodynamic Theories in Social Work

Introduction

When psychodynamic theory entered social work in the USA in the late 1920s, social work education had already existed there for about 20 years. At this time Richmond had established casework, work with individuals and families, as the method used by professional social workers. She worked thoroughly and systematically, both in setting diagnosis and creating a procedure of treatment.

Richmond developed the casework-method with a foundation in natural sciences. She had a strong methodology, but a weak theoretical context to tie to the methodology. This situation made the profession "open" to Freud's theory which had a great impact at the time. The classical psychodynamic theory includes both an understanding of a child's development, of the personality's construction, and of the development of mental illnesses and the treatment of these.

Psychoanalysis, as in Freud's method of treatment, has never been a part of social work. Rather, the profession adapted to and implemented psychodynamic theory in the already established tradition and methodology of social work and within the areas social workers where already operating. The psychodynamic perspectives in social work have the main focus on the processes within a person, even though the focus goes beyond this. 'Psycho' – refers to the psyche and 'dynamic' to the fact that the psyche is something that is developing and changing. The person's surroundings and the context are also seen as a part of this process.

Many claim that no other theory has made such an impact in social work as psychodynamic theory. Payne (1991: 38) states it as follows:

> Psychoanalytic ideas, then, form the groundwork which other ideas in social work either naturalize to or respond to and reject, while often still assuming deeply-rooted approaches to clients whose origins lie in distant psychoanalysis.

Classical psychoanalysis, the treatment of mental illness based on psychodynamic theory, has never been practiced in a pure form in social work. However, there has been a wide range of adaptations as the theory was absorbed into the field of social work. These adaptations can be understood in the light of the profession's substance, the institutional framework that social work has always operated within, and the problems that social workers have been working with.

In social work a person has always been viewed as a part of their environment even though the emphasis and focus varies depending on the approach. Psychodynamic theory provides us with the possibility of understanding the personality development and the difficulties that may appear in this development. It provides us with terms to understand our relationship to others and the demands from the surroundings. It also provides us with an understanding of what can be done to overcome difficulties. The main focus is at the individual level. Therefore we will often find that social work models which are heavily influenced by psychodynamic theory are often used with theories having their focus on the environment and the surroundings, such as system theory.

Hollies has, from the 1960s, been a central representative for the development of psychosocial work in which psychodynamic theory is integrated. Gradually, Hollies has, as many other representatives for the development of psychodynamic theory in social work, also included system theory. She uses system theory to understand the individual's relationship to their environment and outer 'press', while using psychodynamic theory to understand 'stress' within the individual. The main focus however, is on the stress within a person. The terms being used and the context they are placed in shows the foundations in psychodynamic theory, even though they are adapted and adjusted to social work. Often, these approaches are described as "psychosocial work".

Origin and development

Classical psychodynamic theory

The perspectives in social work that we can call psychodynamic, all have an origin which leads back to Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Freud was an educated

physician and worked for many years as a researcher within the area of neurology before he developed a theory about:

• The personality's construction

• Children's development

• Mental illness and treatment

These three parts of the theory make up a whole. In the following we want to present the fundamental classical psychodynamic theory. Freud wrote a lot, and it is self-explanatory that this presentation will be brief and more like an outline, but we have made an attempt at presenting the core of the theory.

The Personality

Freud worked for many years trying to describe the personality in a model. He ended up with a model where the personality is described as consisting of three main structures which are in a dynamic relationship to each other;

• The id

• The ego

• The superego

In a reasonable balanced person, these three structures will harmonise and be part of a unit, operating together and in a continual exchange. The "purpose' with the personality is to control the link between the drives and the needs on one side, and the individual as a member of society on the other. The id is the fundamental and only hereditary part of the personality and it consists of needs, drives and impulses. The Ego and Superego are not hereditary, they develop. The id is driven by the pleasure principle, seeking immediate gratification of unsatisfied needs. The Id's job is to avoid displeasure and suffering. The newborn is therefore completely controlled by id, Freud argued. In addition to the fundamental needs for food and warmth regulation, he meant that aggression and sexual drives were the most important drives for the development of the personality (Freud 1972).

For the newborn, another person is necessary for the gratification of needs which are not being met by the reflexes. Being able to tolerate a delay in getting needs satisfied is deferred gratification. If all the needs are being met immediately there will be no development. The frustrations, however, should be of the right amount in order to encourage development. If they are too large they will impede the development.

Freud describes ego as created through stages of development. Ego represents a person's reason and will which governs the behavior in a beneficial way. The purpose of the ego is primarily the fulfillment of the id's drives, but in a way that is acceptable in the child's social environment. The child is adapting to the environment, and 'the pleasure principle' is slowly being replaced by what Freud calls the "reality principle". The reality principle is the strategy the ego learns to hold back impulses from the id until they can be satisfied in a socially accepted manner. The ego is serving three masters:

• The outside world

• The superego

• The id

In the first years of life a child's behavior will be governed and regulated by the parents. The child is dependent on their parents to get their needs satisfied. They will try to behave so that their needs are met and also to avoid anxiety. Gradually the outer influence and regulation from the parents will become integral because of the creation of a structure in the psyche, which Freud calls the superego. The superego observes, governs and threatens in the same manner as the parents did during the years of childhood, as an inner consciousness (ibid).

According to Freud, the superego consists of some ideal norms and values that the ego tries to live by, and which has its model based on societies and parent's norms and values. Many of the conflicts that the child is experiencing between their instinctive drives and the demands of the surroundings take place as a sort of inner dialogue between the ego and the superego. Freud states that the child has then internalized the parent's norms and attitudes, that is; they have made

them a part of themselves. A "bad conscience" or feeling guilty is the superego's way of punishing the ego.

The superego is about what is morally correct and acceptable. According to Freud a harmonic development is when one is able to deal with the demands both from the id and the superego in a satisfying way. Because the superego is created by reactions to the surroundings, and not as a part of rational thinking, there may be many struggling with taboos that the person him/herself actually disapprove of. To acquire more sensible and realistic moral assessments can therefore be a long way to go for many in adult age (ibid).

When we, in the field of social work education, are expressing the importance of developing a consciousness about one's own values and norms, this stems from a way of thinking built on psychodynamic theory. We presume that unconscious attitudes and prejudices developed at an earlier stage in life are a part of governing our reactions. To work towards greater awareness of the system that is shaping our behavior is seen as important both in education and in practice. By bringing attitudes together with rational thinking and reflection, the belief is that they can change.

Children's development

Psychoanalytic theory has as its starting point that the personality develops and is shaped by a process where the reality principle takes control of the instinctive drives. The governing of the pleasure principle must take place in acceptable ways, that is, a restraint, possible to live with, and acceptable to the surroundings. If this process is not developing in a successful manner, libido could be 'fixated' in activities linked to this stage, and this may lead to difficulties later in life.

Freud was of the opinion that the human being has a closed energy system and that each individual has a constant amount of energy given at birth. He argues that there are two fundamental drives (translated from Freud 1972: 77–78):

After hesitating for a long time we have decided to assume that there are only two existing fundamental drives, Eros and the death drive … The goal of Eros is to continually procure and hold on to more and more, while the death drive has as its goal to dissolve the surroundings and thereby destroy everything.

Freud assumed Eros or libido to be the strongest drive. Freud ties the Eros to the instinct of self preservation. He argues that the drives cannot be destroyed; rather they are transformed into different forms. Freud acknowledges and emphasizes the existence of sexuality from birth. The child's sexual energy, libido, is linked to different erogenous zones. He divides the child's psychosexual development into stages. Each stage in the development is characterized by the dominance of one erogenous zone. First, it is the mouth, "the oral stage", from birth to approximately two years of age. The child experiences satisfaction by sucking and putting everything into their mouth. The child is exploring through the mouth during these first years.

The period from approximately one to three years old is what Freud calls "the anal stage". He argues that the child finds pleasure from holding back and releasing faeces, testing the parents focus on toilet training. In this way the parents represent the outer world with their demands.

Freud calls the period from three to six years old 'the phallic stage'. The libido is then specifically linked to the genitals. The child is becoming aware of the difference between men and women, and their sexual instincts are being directed towards the parent of the opposite gender. It is in this stage the Oedipus conflict has to be resolved. The child sees the parent of the same gender as a competitor whom he/she has to render harmless. The child is becoming aware that boys have penises while girls do not. The boy is afraid that the father will castrate him, in order to punish him. Freud argues that this conflict, with the subsequent anxiety for the child, is the source of a lot of anxieties with origins in inner forbidden feelings. To be able to come out of this stage without "wounds", the children reduce the anxiety by gradually indentifying with the parent of the same gender.

It is these first stages, towards the age of six, which Freud sees as especially important for further development. After this age, according to Freud, a more latent period follows until puberty. The psychosexual development is now stationary while the main focus is directed towards the world around them. The children are not as occupied with the body as they have been previously. The gaze is outwards and they use their energy to deal with the world, their surroundings. This stage is to be replaced by the genital stage in puberty which is characterized by adult sexuality and functioning.

Through the process of socializing, young people are shaped into their roles. The conflict between reality and the pleasure principle is central in periods of adjustment between instincts and the surrounding world. Difficulties associated with finding a balance between these two principles at any stage leads to the individual's development being held back at this stage and can lead to consequences for the individual's personality at a later stage.

Psychological disorders and treatment

Psychoanalysis is the form of treatment within psychodynamic theory and is used in therapies. A characteristic of the 'pure' psychoanalysis is that the treatment takes a long time, and that the focus is on the past, the childhood, in order to capture the situations that created anxiety. It is especially in the treatment of neuroses, Freud argues, that psychoanalysis can be of help. He is of the opinion that it is less accessible for people with more serious psychological illnesses because of its need of the ego to have retained a certain amount of inner coherence and insight into the demands of reality (Freud 192). As we will see later in this chapter many offshoots of psychoanalysis have been bearing fruits and been included in other theories and adapted to action models directed towards different types of problems.

Neuroses, in this theoretical perspective, are seen as a sign that the defense mechanisms, which try to govern the anxiety, are having such an impact on the person that normal self-realization is inhibited. Through analysis based on associations, dreams and a free floating of thoughts, the therapist will – together with the patient – analyze the dreams and thoughts. In this way the unconscious are made conscious. Freud presumes several layers of the unconscious, where the pre-conscious is closest to the consciousness. An important part of the treatment is 'transference' where the therapist enters the parent role and provides the client with the possibility to relive that which caused the anxiety in the first place. Repressed thoughts and emotions are gradually revealed and articulated. The original conflict is getting a 'new chance', and the therapist can contribute to a less conflict-filled solution. The client is given a new possibility. Freud also assumed that the therapist similarly could react irrationally to the client's transference, and he called such a reaction "counter-transference". The social worker is then in a situation where he or she has emotions for the client which are

transferred from emotions he or she has had to other important people in their life.

"The defense mechanisms" play an important role in Freud's illness and treatment theory. He defines defense mechanisms as unconscious strategies used to deal with negative emotions, where repression is especially emphasized. He gives the following picture of how repression holds back memories, emotions and desires from the consciousness: At first a large private room (the unconscious), then a corridor (the pre conscious) and then a public room (the conscious). In the corridor between the two rooms is the doorkeeper, and some of the impulses are being stopped here and pushed back again because they are too uncomfortable and irreconcilable with the ego. The need being repressed will be loaded with a certain amount of energy which the ego has to use force on to hold back. Traumatic or highly conflicting experiences can also be repressed to the room of the unconscious.

The more energy that has to be used to hold these emotions unconscious, the less energy will be left for the personality to develop and to strengthen the ego. The defence can be weakened by use of drugs or when having a fever. Sexual or aggressive tendencies can appear. The same happens during sleep. Freud uses dream analysis as a gateway to unconscious conflicts. Here, also, a constant level of energy is seen as necessary.

When conflicts are too difficult for the ego to process, the ego's defense comes in vigilantly. The reason for the development of the defense mechanisms is assumed to be a real situation of anxiety. The defense's primary task is to remove the anxiety while the secondary task is to remove the reasons behind the anxiety. It also serves the ability of the individual to function at a fairly reasonable level. Freud (translated from the extract 1972: 27) describes how he worked to get in touch with the unconscious:

When we got to the point where they insisted that they did not know any more I reassured them that they still did, they should just speak out, and I dared to argue that the memory that would arise when I placed my hand on their forehead, would be the right one. In this way I succeeded without using hypnoses to get the

patients to tell all that was needed to find the connection between the forgotten pathogenic scenes and the symptoms they left behind.

The force a person uses to resist what is repressed to be made conscious Freud calls 'resistance'.

Freud divides between two main forms of anxiety:

• Real anxiety

• Neurotic anxiety

Real anxiety, Freud says, is anxiety about something experienced as real danger. Neurotic anxiety however, is not in proportion to the real encountered situation. The real anxiety, Freud argues, is a precursor to neurotic anxiety, and the way this is dealt with is what decides if it will lead to neurotic anxiety later. Freud alleged that neurotic anxiety stemmed from unconscious conflicts between drives and restrictions. These mental processes, Freud argues, take place in the unconscious. Neurotic anxiety occurs when these unconscious conflicts are getting close to the consciousness and become so threatening that the energy being used to keep the conflicts unconscious prevents the person from functioning in a normal way.

It is when this anxiety becomes so paralyzing that it restrains the individual, that it is defined as neurotic.

Defense mechanisms, from a psychodynamic point of view, are something that all people use when adapting to social norms, and defense mechanisms makes it possible to conform into a society with others. If the defense mechanisms become so all-encompassing that they dominate a person's life it is difficult for the person to act and behave rationally.

View of humanity in classic psychodynamic theory

The classic psychodynamic theory, Freud's original, is built on an assumption of psychological determinism which means that all behavior, thoughts, emotions, actions and symptoms have a reason. These causalities can be found in previous experiences. The majority of these causalities are unconscious, but they still play a role. Through dreams, slips of the tongue and associations, one can get in contact

with the unconscious. Often, the comparison with an iceberg is used here. Only the top is visible at all times, while the biggest part is hidden from us. Still, the whole iceberg is there, and so are its consequences. Freud argues that none of our actions happen by chance, even though there is no immediate understanding of any cause.

Freud views the human being as primarily governed by these inner processes which are largely unconscious. He sees the rational forces as inferior to the unconscious. A person's energy is given at birth, and the growth comes from within. The surroundings can contribute to either hinder or further this growth. Freud's drive theory is based on the biological drives as fundamental for human behavior. A person's free will is not given much weight in this theory because human beings are subject to their drives and their history.

Freud perceives society as a hindrance for the human being to live by the pleasure – principle. The individual's meeting with society and its norms and values leads to the repression or change of their drives. Freud describes the "primitive man's" great possibilities to live according to the pleasure principle. At the same time, their lives were characterized by more coincidences and less certainty. The bad living conditions made happiness relatively momentary. "The cultural being" has in exchange for improved living conditions given away happiness. Simultaneously, within Freud's theory, it is implicit that a controlling society, which prevents the individual from acting on their drives and impulses, is necessary to avoid chaos.

Elaboration of the psychodynamic theory within psychology

Psychosocial stages throughout life

Erikson extends the theory of developmental stages further. He identifies eight developmental stages (table 1) which he argues the human being goes through from birth to old age and then death (Erikson 1974). He is of the opinion that the development within the various stages comes about through crises which determine the formation of normal or deviant personality. While Freud divides the development in childhood into "psychosexual stages", Erikson divides the lifespan into "psychosocial stages". He sees development as a lifelong process. Erikson calls the developmental stages psychosocial because development is also dependent upon social relations established in various stages in life. He is more

concerned about how the ego handles the surroundings than focusing on sexual drives and impulses.

Erikson has as a starting point that at each stage in life the individual is confronted with certain challenges, and developmental conflicts arise. The conflicts have in them both the possibility for growth and development, as well as the vulnerability of being hindered in one's development. Erikson argues the conflicts in these transitions between stages occur because there is both a change and development of the drives and the physical body, and the demands to the individual from the surroundings are changing over time. These developmental stages are seen as conflict situations carrying the possibility of both a positive and a negative outcome. The task of the ego is to solve these new situations in a way that will lead to growth and development.

Table 1 Erikson's psychosocial stages

Stage	Psychosocial conflict	Desirable outcomes
First year of life	Trust vs. Mistrust	Trust and optimism
Second year of life	Autonomy vs. Doubt	Sense of personal control
Third, fourth and fifth year of life	Initiativ vs. Guilt	Ability to take initiative to own activities
From sixth year of life and up to puberty	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competency in intellectual, social and physical skills
Adolescence	Identity vs. Role confusion	An integrated perception of oneself as a unique person.
Early adulthood (20–40 years old)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Ability to form intimate and long lasting relations, establishing a professional life
Middle age /adulthood (40–65 years old)	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care of family, society and future generations
Old age	Ego integrity vs. Bitterness and despair	A feeling of satisfaction when looking back and a 'willingness' to face death.

In childhood, Erikson especially focuses on the parents demands (Erikson 1974). In the first stage, the first year of living, the foundation of trust towards the surroundings is laid (see table 1). The needs are to be satisfied in a balanced way. At the same time the person who is the responsible caretaker will become an inner certainty in the child. This is the challenge in this stage. The infant's first social achievement is the willingness to let the mother out of sight without an unfounded anxiety, because she has become an inner certainty as well as an outer predictability. Erikson further argues that the regularity in the experiences which tie the inner conception-images with what is happening in the outer world, is the foundation for the ego identity. He uses child schizophrenia as an example of psychological disorder where such a fundamental trust has not been able to develop (Erikson 1974).

In the second stage the child itself will start trying out independency. The fundamental trust in the surroundings is tested when the child is to exercise their own will and make decisions themselves. Through step by step experiences, guided by the caretaker with a firm and consistent hand, the child should be given so much freedom that it can try out things but not so much that it creates anxiety. Erikson also describes the shame when feeling exposed to others' view without being prepared for being visible. Doubt is linked to consciousness having a front and a back side, especially the latter. This backside is described by Erikson as the children's "dark continent" that others can steal and overpower. The waste from the intestines which it was ok to let go of originally, is now being controlled. This creates a basic feeling of doubt in what one has left behind. If the individual goes through this stage with a feeling of self control and without loss of self respect, it will create a lasting foundation for a feeling of good will and pride. Loss of self control on the other hand, may develop a feeling of doubt and shame.

In the third stage, at approximately by four or five years of age, it is initiative which is being formed. The child is now mastering many things and is on the go, literally speaking. Erikson uses the terms "attack" and "conquering" as the ways the child behaves and expresses itself. The danger at this stage is if the child is feeling guilt over the actions leading to the pleasurable feeling of their new locomotor functions and mental control. Erikson describes the castration complex in the same way as Freud. He argues that the conflict here is between the possibility of an honourable human existence on one hand and the possibility of a

complete destruction on the other. The identification with the parent of the same gender is to help the child further in their development.

From about the sixth year and up to puberty is when the foundation for industriousness is laid. The child learns to gain acknowledgement by making things. Reading and writing is to be learnt; the cultural tools are to be mastered. Erikson refers to the fact that children in all cultures get some form of systematic training at this age. The danger in this stage is if the child has experiences which give a feeling of inferiority and being inadequate. What is important here is how the child is mastering school and its demands. It is here the foundation for industriousness is being laid. This as the opposite to the feeling of failure and inferiority.

In the teenage stage childhood is concluding and adolescence starts. This is a transitional stage where all the previously experienced development-crises are being tested, according to Erikson. The youth has to manage puberty which represents a physical revolution. In addition, the view towards the adult world is becoming real, and serious choices are to be made. There is an integration in progress where ego is to coordinate all the identifications with the demands of libido.

Erikson defines the experience of ego identity as the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the previous stages, matches the sameness and continuity of one meaning to others. The danger here is role-confusion. This is seen as a challenging stage where it is also necessary to become aware of enemy images to arrive at one's own identity.

In early adult life, a person is eager to let her/his own identity blend with others. The young adult individual is set for intimacy and to make close friendships and relationships, and is also concerned about developing moral strength that can last through long binding relationships. The danger in this stage is the experience of isolation if not having long-lasting connections that require nearness.

In the midlife period, Erikson focuses on the individual's need to feel useful. There is a need to be valued and sought after because of one's experiences through a long life. It is about the need to create and guide the next generation. This is

related to one's own children, but also to general creativeness and productivity. The danger in this stage is stagnation.

In Erikson's last stage, old age, coming to an acceptance of one's own lived life is important and that it not necessarily could have been replaced with something else. We could call this an "I did it my way" – acceptance. An acceptance of one's own life being a concurrence between a life and a certain part of history. A failure in this accumulated ego – integration is characterized by fear of death. Life as it has been lived is not being accepted by the person him/herself. Despair of the life one did not have, is evident.

This is how Erikson describes the lifelong psychosocial development of the human being. Even though he does not dismiss the importance of the drives and instincts, the main emphasis is on the ego's mastering of relations and connections to the outside world.

Early object relations importance in life

Object relation theory is another continuation of Freud's classical theory. Mahler (1879–1985) together with Klein (1948) are leading representatives for this continuation. "Object" is understood as a love-object; people who are emotionally important. The first important object is the mother, or a mother figure. Then other objects enter the stage; that is, other people that the child makes an emotional relationship with. Based on the early interactions, with emphasis on the mother/child relationship, they argue that the child is creating an inner picture of the object and the situation around the interaction. This picture, or object presentation, of the mother becomes a psychological structure in the ego. It is the child's subjective picture of the mother which is created. These inner structures are carried on in life and are important for the individual's way of reacting towards others later in life. With a basis in the early experiences of interactions the child is developing a view of itself, her/his careers and what he/she can expect from others.

Bowlby (1969, 1988) developed a theoretical framework for the study of the attachment between children and parents by integrating three theories; ethology (the study of animals' development and survival), psychodynamic theory and system theory. According to Bowlby's attachment theory, all children are attached

to their parents no matter how they are treated, but they attach themselves in different ways depending on the emotional interaction. The function of the attachment behavior is to hold the child close enough to the mother so as to increase the possibilities of survival. In this way the child is born with a range of specific characteristics. Based on the experiences from early interaction with the carers the child develops an opinion of itself, their carers and what is expect from others. The experiences contribute in how the child is making attachment patterns. These become working models when they later become parents themselves.

Defence mechanisms

Anna Freud (1994) together with others developed the theory about the function of defense mechanisms. Freud was especially focused on how the ego can use 'repression' as a defense mechanism to deal with unacceptable needs and thoughts. Successors have described a range of other defense mechanisms. "Intellectualization" is one of these and is about when a person is only relating intellectually to something which awakes anxiety. A defense mechanism where reactions are transferred to something other than what was originally the starting point, is called 'transference'. With 'projection', one's own feelings that one does not want to admit to, are transferred to other people.

A stronger focus on ego's role in personality development

One of the characteristics of the shift in psychodynamic theory is that there is a greater focus on ego and its relationship to the surroundings. Important characteristics are the ability to create meaning of the experiences and the down toning of the importance of the drives' influence on ego's development.

Erik Erikson and Anna Freud (Sigmund Freud's daughter) place less importance on the conflict between the id and the superego and ascribe ego with a more independent role in the personality development. Erikson describes three processes which govern human beings behaviour: ego processes, physical processes and social processes (1974). The human being is seen as part biological organism, part person with an ego and part social member of society. He states that the human being can be understood by observing these three parts as interrelated even though they can be described separately. In the developmental crises, great emphasis is placed on the positive possibilities the individual

possesses throughout their life. This more active view on human life can be said to be integrated in psychodynamic models in social work today.

The area of Social Work Practice

Social work existed as a discipline when psychodynamic theory was made accessible. The discipline was however new and with little theoretical ballast. Social work had its origin in practise. With this as its starting point, case work (work with individuals and families) was developed as a method. Mary Richmond was especially central in this work. She explains the background for why she started developing the work with case work as follows (Richmond 1917: 5):

With other practitioners – with physicians and lawyers, for example – there was always a basis of knowledge held in common. If a neurologist had occasion to confer with a surgeon, each could assume in the other a mastery of the elements of a whole group of basic sciences and of the formulated and transmitted experience of this own guild besides. But what common knowledge could social workers assume in like case? This was my query of fifteen years ago. It seemed to me then, and it is still my opinion, that the elements of social diagnosis, if formulated, should constitute a part of the ground which all social case workers could occupy in common, and that it should become possible in time to take for granted, in every social practitioner, a knowledge and mastery of those elements, and of the modifications in them which each decade of practice would surely bring.

In this way she wanted to contribute to develop a knowledge bank which should be common for social workers. In the method Richmond developed, she focused on a good relationship between the social worker and the client. In this relationship, information and advice is imparted, discussions held, the client is to gain greater insight into his/her own situation and solution alternatives so that he/she can act in alternative ways. With her strong connections to natural science, Richmond tried to give social work a scientific foundation. Through a systematic gathering of data the social diagnosis is set and treatment procedures to correct the reasons of the problems are made and implemented. The methodology could easily be connected to the research process. Richmond believed that as long as the methods in social work were good enough, then it should be possible to find the reasons for social problems and prescribe a

treatment. Richmond points out that both the economical and social situation influence the individual's problems, so in the work of mapping out the causality these reasons are included. She also emphasises that each individual should be perceived and treated uniquely, also when these outer conditions are described.

Richmond wanted to develop social work to become a profession. Her methods are thorough and systematic, concerned both with deciding diagnoses as well as forms of treatment. Her interest in the social environment developed into an interest for the family as a social unit. In this way she is also a pioneer for family work.

Richmond was criticised for not incorporating psychodynamic theory. However, after the First World War this theory gained a foothold in case work.

Hollis – a central representative for the development of psychodynamic theory in social work

With the development of psychodynamic theory and more emphasis on psychosocial life stages and Ego's mastering of developmental crises, the psychodynamic theory was made more accessible to social work. One central representative for the development of psychosocial work from the1960s is Florence Hollis. She wrote many books in social work in the category of psychodynamic theory. In *Casework: A Psychosocial Therapy* (1972) she argues how psychosocial therapy is different from psychotherapy, and how social workers ought to have an independent role among psycho- therapists. Hollis focuses on how social workers also can be seen as "clinical practitioners".

She developed her models with a foundation in case work and with a strong influence from psychodynamic therapy. Gradually the focus was shifted towards the environment and in the second edition (1972) and the third edition which she wrote with Woods (1981) she integrated system theory into her models. The person who is being treated must be seen in the context of his /her relationships and environments. Hollis and Woods (1981) use system theory to analyze the outside world and to understand "pressure". A person is influenced by "pressure" from the environment and "stress" from conflicts within themselves. The interplay between outer pressure and inner stress is complicated. Hollis and Wood use psychodynamic theory to understand stress. In their model, stress is

seen as more important than pressure in order to understand the cause of the problems and how the social worker can proceed in the work.

Hollis and Wood viewed defense mechanisms as vital in understanding the interaction with the environment. In the following we can see how psychodynamic theory is used to understand stress. Hollis and Wood are of the opinion that the reasons for the problematic living situation can be found in the following:

- A weak ego or superego which influences how independently a person acts, how strong their character is and if one can delay needs

- Fixation in earlier stages – needs not being dealt with acceptably, so that the person is impaired in further development.

- Pressure from the environment, bad economy, bad living conditions.

  Outside pressure can be changed through material support (economy, housing, practical help etc) or the client can be supported in undertaking these changes themselves. Inner stress can be worked with by changing the balance of the conflicting forces within the client. The following techniques being used are:

1. Venting. The client is allowed to express suppressed feelings which have 'locked' their thoughts and feelings and influenced behavior.

2. Corrective relationship: The relationship between the social worker can be related to the mother/child relationship. In a safe atmosphere, which the social worker is responsible for, the client is given the possibility to go through previous experiences. There are new possibilities to confront forbidden feelings and unacceptable behavior.

3. Examine current personal interactions that the client is involved in: The main strategy here is reflection. The social worker is to help the client in the reflection over past experiences and to see the connection of how this is having an impact on the client's interactions at date.

In the light of this the client, with the support of the social worker, reaches a new set of behaviour built on this insight.

Hollis (1970) formulates the principles for psychosocial work as follows:

1. The social workers have to care about the client, accept and respect him/her.

2. The client's need is the focus.

3. The understanding of the client must be scientifically founded and objective.

4. The social worker must respect the client's right of self-determination.

5. There are cases where one has to take the responsibility so that the client does not hurt themself or others.

As it can be seen, Hollis is using terms from psychodynamic theory as a guide to understand inner stress. Hollis developed further the emphasis of family work, as established by Richmond, within the psychodynamic tradition. She wanted to integrate family therapy as a part of social work.

The social worker in this tradition is seen as responsible for creating a climate in the relationship with the client which makes it possible for the client to express feelings. The social worker is seen as an 'expert', that is; the one who is guiding the client through the work on unconscious conflicts, resistance and transfer. The social workers responsibility is to make ground for an atmosphere which the client will experience as safe and accepting and therefore have the courage to work on unconscious conflicts and let these up and out.

One term used about opening up for suppressed feelings is 'venting'. This involves the client opening up to feelings that the ego previously has seen as dangerous. The task of the social worker is to arrange for the client's possibility of abreaction and dealing with previous forbidden feelings. These conflicts are linked to previous experiences, often back in childhood. The client is now given the possibility of not only letting feelings out, to vent, but also to go through them again. The social worker is to help the client using rational thinking and activating the ego in the process of abreaction.

Another important term in this process is 'transference'. The client transfers the feelings they had for other close people, often the parents since the conflict is often linked to childhood, on to the social worker. The social worker is then in the role of the parents in this process. It could be said that the social worker is playing the part of a parent to help the client work through the conflict in more suitable ways. The goal is that the conflict is not experienced as a threat to the personality. The goal is to make the conflict conscious and to deal with it at a conscious level so that it is possible to live with

In this process the term "counter-transference" appears, because the social worker can react irrationally and place the client in a role in a drama which has taken place previously in the social worker's life, but which now exists as an unconscious conflict.

Bernler and Johnsson – psychosocial work

Leading Nordic representatives for psychosocial work are Bernler and Johnsson (1988, 1993). They have been involved in developing psychosocial work used with individuals, families and groups in order to prevent or treat problems. They do not see community work, administration or planning as psychosocial work. Their psychosocial work has integrated psychodynamic thinking as an important component in the approach, both for understanding and for taking action. In their course of actions they use key terms from psychodynamic theory such as 'id", "ego", "super ego", "resistance", "transference", "ventilation" and "defense mechanism". However, they also point out that the interaction between the human being and the environment is fundamental to understand how problems arise and remain. They state that theory is needed to explain reasons for psychosocial problems. With a starting point in what is seen as reasons, hypotheses linked to the action are then formulated. They argue that often it is about circular causality, and that it can be difficult to point out what are the reasons and what are the effects. Rather, one should attempt to understand as much as possible of the causal relationships and the process from where the psychodynamic problems have arisen and held in. Here they make use of system theory in the same way as Hollies and Woods (1981).

Work with people who are experiencing traumatic crises

Work with people who have experienced traumatic crises has also influenced and been included in social work. The work is directed towards both individuals and groups. It takes aim at understanding and supporting people in emergency situations, that is; people who are in a situation that exceeds their mastering capabilities. Cullberg (1978) takes his understanding of the human being's development, growth and sensitive periods from psychoanalytic theory. He makes a distinction between developmental crises during stages in life, as Erikson describes, and traumatic crises. Cullberg develops a theory about people's reactions in crises situations and consequences of the crises. He uses knowledge from ego-psychology about conditions for mobilisation of human resources and growth. The crises reactions are described in phases, and the course of action correlates to these phases. Emotional support and emotional expression is vital. Cullberg stresses that when understanding a situation, the inner meaning it has had for the individual must be illuminated by mapping the individual's biography and developmental history. Two persons can react completely differently in the same situation, for example loosing someone close to you. Each person's developmental history will in part explain the different reactions. Moreover, the differences can also be explained by where in life the individual is at. And of course, social expectations, family situation and network also play an important part.

In crisis intervention it is emphasized that crises and crisis reactions are not a sickness, but a healthy reaction when the foundation is shattered by unexpected and overwhelming events. The aim in crisis intervention is to support the client's own resources so that the crisis can evolve into a natural progress of processing and reorientation. The aim is not to assist in denial of the situation or trying to give back what has been lost. The aim is to support the person in the confrontation with reality and to counteract reality suppression. A person who is stricken by a crisis must be given the possibility to live through grief and the difficult feelings that entails, for example the feeling of guilt. The helper is to be a stabilizing factor and provide hope that the complete chaos and the storm that the crisis brings about will change over time. In later years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the importance of a persons' network in crisis intervention.

Work with families

Many people would claim that work with families has always been a part of the psychosocial work tradition. Gradually, family therapy is close to becoming its own profession. Where the dividing line is between psychosocial work with families and family-therapy is not always easy to tell. Bernler and Cajvert (2001) summarize it as follows:

Psychosocial work in families	Family therapy
The work with families is often just one part of the work	The work with the family is often the whole task
There is always a restricted goal	The goal varies. Sometimes the goal for change is more extreme – a change of the family system
Family theoretical eclecticism	The viewpoints are often eclectic, but usually one or a few theories are laid as a foundation.
More freedom in forms and framework	Generally a stricter framework in regard to space, time and method.

These points show some of the differences, but as mentioned above, these differences are often vague. The action models in family therapy have often had different theoretical roots. In work with children and families where psychodynamic theory is the foundation, the childhood is seen as vital. Child neglect is understood in light of the parents' earlier experiences. What the parents are doing towards their children is related to how they themselves were treated as children. To understand the causal connections of the problems the children in the families are experiencing, both the parents' earlier experiences as well as how the family is handling the parent role is investigated. This is to understand why the parents are not managing the role of parents. Unconscious processes, defense mechanisms and personality development in psychosocial stages and object relation theory are all important factors in these family therapy models.

Kari Killen Heap (1988) provides a model in *Child neglect and child abuse (Omsorgssvikt og barnemishandling)* which can be placed in a psychodynamic tradition. She stresses that the model she uses has a holistic approach, while at the same times she draws lines back to the casework-tradition with Hollies among others. In work with children being neglected, she emphasises the use of "psychosocial examination and diagnosis of the child's and parents' situation". She states clearly that this should not only be a description of a phenomenon, but also provide an understanding of a process, what is happening and has happened in the family. Work with families also involves solving unprocessed crises, relationship issues and external burdens.

Psychodynamic terminology is vital in Heap's model, and she emphasizes the importance of ego-psychology in the model as follows:

It is about understanding how people, children and adults, relate to their surroundings and develop in interaction with these. Ego psychology has a central and integrative role in the model, in that it represents a bridge builder between the understanding and how the human being perceives and deals with society's conditions, burdens and role expectations, and how they manage their own inner life and their interaction with close others. Ego psychology theories and knowledge about personality development is therefore of fundamental significance for the model, being it Freud's formulations about the ego and its defense mechanisms or Erikson's theories about personal development. (translation from the extract, Heap 1988: 137)

The parents own childhood and previous experiences are vital in Heap's model when analysing the current life situation. She describes parenting capacity on a scale from "good enough" to "too bad" (Killen Heap 1988, Killen 1994, Killen 2000). She focuses on early parent-child-interaction. As Hollies, also Heap uses system theory to understand the individual and family function in relation to rest of the society.

She has also given Bowlby (1969, 1988) a central position in understanding the interaction between a child and the carer and what disturbances can be, and what can be done. In a book about children, parents and substance abuse, the following areas in work with families are emphasised (Killen & Olofsson 2003):

- *Work with parents' childhood experiences*

To become aware of the significance of one owns childhood experiences in the role as a parent can provide many possibilities for growth. It presupposes that all people develop "inner working models" for what it entails to be a parent and child, and that these working models are developing together with the development of attachment patterns. In this way human beings are being 'trained' early in the parenting role which we will repeat when we become parents ourselves, if not working on modifying it. To become aware of one's own experiences becomes crucial. Even though the work on such consciousness-raising is made out as essential, the authors state that some people experience more help in work with a here and now perspective.

- *Development of the parents understanding of the effect of their substance abuse on the children.*

To improve the ability to "see" the children and empathize with their experiences of the situation is vital in the work with families. It is argued that there is of little use to point at the consequences. It is the parents themselves, through support and help, that must learn to see these consequences, and it is here an understanding of one owns childhood experiences are important. In regard to substance abuse it is often so that the children take responsibility and behave like parents for their own parents. It is therefore crucial to help the parents acknowledging that this is not good for the children's own development. By the means of conversations between the social worker and the parents, the parents are assisted in empathising with the children's situation.

- *Work on parents/children interaction*

The interaction between children and parents is seen as decisive for the children's emotional, cognitive and social development. It is also a crucial tool in the treatment. The authors argue that encouraging parents to talk and play with the children, can trigger potentials in the parents. This can also be done together in groups with other parents.

- *Reduction of stress*

This concerns work with outside conditions. It can be about housing, economy or other. The conditions have to be discussed, strategies made and measures implemented.

- *Building and strengthening of network.*

To have a network available to you is crucial for how one performs and copes in the parent role. Support to establish a new network or strengthen relationships the parents have with people already is often a part of this work.

The work process in psychosocial work

Bernler and Johnsson are skeptical of the traditional division into stages in the working process in social work and argue that there are often setbacks to previous stages (Bernler and Johnsson 1988). They share this critique with others using psychodynamic models in social work. Problem solving, the setting of subsidiary goals or having a strict work structure is not as important here as in behavioural and cognitive theories for example. However, it is difficult not to use a description following a timeline when describing the work process in a textbook. There is the start of a process, one is in the process and then it is the completion of a process. In the following we will have a look at what Bernler and Johnsson emphasize in the start up, the implementation and the closing of a process. This in regard to:

- The first conversation

- The treatment

- The closing

The first conversation

Bernler (2001) raises four conditions which should be of special concern in the first conversation.

1. An orientation of the problems.

The client visits the social worker. The social worker needs to acquire an understanding of the character, size and structure of the problems. It should also

be clarified if the institution has the mandate to work on what is wanted and if the competency is available or if referrals should be made to others.

2. An evaluation of the client's conditions for treatment.

This includes acquainting oneself with the client's life situation: daily life, where he or she lives, working conditions, personal relations with family, relatives and friends and what they are doing in their spare time.

3. An agreement of the goal of the treatment.

The goal here can be to help the client in mastering limited problems and to improve the client's material, knowledge or psychological resources. It can be about strengthening the ability to deal with problems generally, which Bernler describes as achieving confined personality changes. In psycho social work it is clearly stated that extensive personality changes should not be worked on. If the goals are too diffuse, one should assist the client in reformulating the goals.

4. An agreement on the framework for the treatment.

The social worker offers a certain amount of conversations or a timeframe and gives the reasons for these.

Points 3 and 4 are often described as a contract even though it is not a legal document, and often it is not written either. Bernler is emphasizing two points as important for the contract:

1. An agreement of duty of confidentiality and what this duty includes. If there are limitations in the duty of confidentiality they should be made clear for the client. This can for example be if one discusses the case with colleagues. The client should be informed about this in advance.

2. An agreement of the therapist's right to 'get involved' in the client's life. The social worker ought to have explained his or her working methods so that the client can decide if they agree to this working alliance. The client's responsibility is to come to the appointments and be open about his or her personal conditions. What the social worker is allowed to interfere with is

what there has been made an agreement about. This as different from psychotherapy where the therapist can interfere with everything.

When the first conversation is finished in a functional manner, the client has taken the seat in the 'client's chair' and the social worker in the "therapist chair". Bernler states that a certain prediction about what is to come creates both security and anticipation in the relationship.

The treatment

The term treatment is defined as follows: "A systematic, positive interference in individuals and groups problem-causing processes" (Bernler, Johnsson and Skårner 1993).

Here the starting point is that contact is being established because of psychosocial problems. One tries to get a complete picture of the situation. Within this picture the problem-causing elements can be highlighted. Treatment is about intervening in these processes in a systematic manner. That means that the intervention is thought through, conscious and theory based. This requires a thorough report, so that an overall picture can be made. Information gathering is usually ongoing, even though the first or the first couple of conversations are the most important. The intervention in individuals and groups problem-causing processes should be positive. The aim is to be an influence so that the problem causing processes change, or that the consequences of the problems can be less damaging.

Bernler (1999) underlines that in psychosocial work there are three processes operating and being worked on at the same time:

1. The historical process (there and then) – that is, that what happened back in time and sometimes way back in time. It concerns childhood experiences and important events in the client's life until now.

2. The actual process (here and now) – what is happening in the client's life at the moment.

3. The treatment process (here and now) – what is happening in the treatment room while the treatment is in process.

In the treatment it is important to parallelize the three processes. Bernler distinguishes between psychotherapeutic work and psychosocial work by what is seen as most important to parallelise. In psychotherapeutic work it is the parallelizing of the historical process and the treatment process which is emphasized, while in psychosocial work it is the parallelizing of the historical process and the actual present situation which is seen as most important. Bernler points out that there is a tendency to underestimate the value of what is happening in the treatment room, and in the client's life overall. He argues that the goal should be to parallelize all the three processes.

The closing

A relationship between a social worker and a client will always hold a closing. Bernler stresses that the client will often have difficulties with a closing. He underlines that it is important to remind the client about the closing if the client him/herself is not mentioning the topic. To prolong the contact the client can come up with new problems or try to redefine the relation as a private one. Bernler is skeptical to private relations and argues that the complicated relation left behind will always be lurking in the dark and most likely the client has an idealistic view of the therapist which does not agree with him/her in their everyday life. He points out the importance of working through the emotions related to the separation so as to reach a positive closing. A positive closing, he says, is that the client partly has internalized the therapist and carries him/her around in their everyday life, and then usually the picture of the therapist will fade as time passes.

Individualization: a vital element in psychodynamic theory

The view of each individual as unique is emphasized in these theories. Humanity is seen as sharing a common human nature, however, within each human being it is being individualized by their different heredity, environment and inherited skills.

Each individual's development is seen as an interaction between inner needs and the child's carers and surroundings. This influence is changing and developing in a dynamic interplay. An individual is therefore at any time a result of this interaction, and as previously stated; a unique person.

In books on methods it is also emphasized that the clients see themselves as unique, and will react if they are being treated as a case and not as a person. In the early stage of social work in the US, the issue about individualization was linked to a better treatment of the poor. At the national meeting of the National Conference of Charities in 1886 it was stated that (Buzelle quoted in Biestek 1997: 27–280):

By experience and knowledge of the individual a classification of our fellow humans would be unsatisfactory. The poor and the ones with even worse conditions do not have the physical, the intellectual or the moralistic in common, and it is therefore impossible to place them in one class. (translated from Norwegian)

This statement was "the declaration about the individualization principle – the foundation for modern social work" (Virginia Robinson sited in Biestek 1972: 28). Given that each individual is special, reaching solutions which are individually accustomed becomes necessary. The needs are unique, and the support should be sought for and adapted accordingly. Great emphasis is placed on how social diagnoses are created and the diagnosis is made through systematic data collection. The fact that each person is unique explains why it is necessary to be exact with the data gathering about the individual or the family one is to help. There are long traditions for this as we have seen all the way back to Mary Richmond.

In all social work, the relation between social worker and the client is very important, but it is especially important in psychodynamic theory and models because the main part of the help being provided is happening between the social worker and the client. As seen earlier in this chapter, psychosocial work sees the environment and the individuals' relation to the surroundings as crucial. Yet it is the individual's mastering and the processes within the individual which is the main focus. The emotional side of a problem is seen as always being present. In other words, even though a material problem is clearly stated, it is also assumed that the client has an emotional relationship to it.

Therefore, the social worker ought to lead the attention towards this, even though the support is of material character. The client is seen as a whole person

where emotions are a part. This side is often seen as the most important for the problems the clients have in the tradition of psychosocial theory.

In psychodynamic theory, individualizing, seeing each individual as unique and to let this underpin the understanding of the problems as well as guiding the work methods, is vital. It is a principle which has been incorporated into social work in general, also where other theoretical approaches are being used.

Life stages and challenges – *I never promised you a rose garden*

Here, with an extract from the novel *I never promised you a rose garden* by Joanna Greenberg, we will show how the psychodynamic view is presented in the text. Then, we will use the understanding of psychodynamic theory when analyzing descriptions from the extract. Vital questions, with a foundation in psychodynamic theory, are: What is Deborah's life history? With a special interest here on the relationship with the mother and other close persons in her early childhood and other strong experiences. Has Deborah experienced traumatic crises? In which stage of life did it happen? Were there things that could have been experienced as difficult in critical stages of her development? What has the relationship to her mother and other close ones been? In which way is Deborah using defense mechanisms? How can a climate be built in the relationship which is safe enough to open up for "dangerous topics". Finally, the text will be a starting point for a discussion of similarities and differences in psychosocial work and psycho analysis.

Extract from the book *I never promised you a rose garden* (Joanne Greenberg, Hannah Green, 1964)

BLAU, DEBORAH 16 yrs. PREV.HOSP: None

INITIAL DIAG: SCHIZOFRENIA.

1. *Testing:* Tests show high (140–150) intelligence, but patterns disturbed by illness. Many questions misinterpreted and over personalized. Entire subjective reaction to interview and testing. Personality tests show typically schizophrenic pattern with compulsive and masochistic component.

2. *Interview (Initial):* On admission patient appeared well oriented and logical in her thinking, but as the interview went on, bits of the logic began to fall away and at anything which could be construed as correction or criticism, she showed extreme anxiety. She did everything she could to impress examiner with her wit, using it as a formidable defence. On three occasions she laughed inappropriately: once when she claimed that the hospitalization had been brought about by a suicide attempt, twice with reference to questions about the date of the month. As the interview proceeded her attitude changed and she began to speak loudly, giving random happenings in her life which she thought to be the cause of her illness. She mentioned an operation at the age of five, the effects of which were traumatic, a cruel babysitter etc. The incidents were unrelated, and no pattern appeared in them. Suddenly, in the middle of recounting an incident, the patient started forward and said accusingly, "I told you the truth about these things – now are you going to help me?" It was considered advisable to terminate the interview.

3. *Family History:* Born Chicago, III October, 1932. Breast-fed 8 mos. One sibling, Susan, born 1937. Father, Jacob Blau, an accountant whose family had emigrated from Poland 1913. Birth normal. At age 5 patient had two operations for removal of tumor in urethra. Difficult financial situation made family move in with grandparents in suburb of Chicago. Situation improved, but father became ill with ulcer and hypertension. In 1942 war caused move to city. Patient made poor adjustment and was taunted by schoolmates. Puberty normal physically, but at age 16 patient attempted suicide. There is a long history of hypochondria, but outside of tumor the physical health has been good.

She turned the page and glanced at the various statistical measurements of personality factors and test scores. Sixteen was younger than any patient she had ever had. Leaving aside consideration of the person herself, it might be good to find out if someone with so little life experience could benefit from therapy and be easier or harder to work with.

In the end it was the girl's age that decided her, and made the report weigh more heavily than the commitment of doctor's meetings to be attended and articles to be written.

"Aber wenn wir … If we succeed …" she murmured, forcing herself away from her native tongues, 'the good years yet to live …"

Again she looked at the facts and the numbers. A report like this had once made her remark to the hospital psychologist, "We must someday make a test to show us where the *health* is as well as the illness."

The psychologist had answered that with hypnotism and the ametyls and pentothals such information could be obtained more easily.

"I do not think so," Dr. Fried had answered. "The *hidden* strength is too deep a secret. But in the end … in the end it is our only ally."

The psychodynamic- understanding within the text

It is evident in what is being noted in the journal that the childhood is emphasised. Both the length of time Deborah was breastfed and traumatic experiences mentioned by the girl herself, are noted. The father's background is also given, and his illness and financial difficulties in her childhood. The focus is on the past, and there is limited information about her life situation at present.

One can also see from the terminology being used that the writer has a psychodynamic view as a foundation. Terms like "traumatic experiences", "defence mechanisms" and in that connection "subjective reactions on the interviewing and testing" are all signals of a psychodynamic approach.

Understanding of the situation in a psychodynamic perspective

At the age of five Deborah has two operations to remove a tumour from the urethra. There is every reason to believe this would have been a painful condition before the surgery, and that the surgery itself would cause agony. If we use Erikson (1974), we can see that in this stage in life, when the surgery happens, it is initiative versus guilt which is the challenge. He describes all the crises linked to the various stages as confusion which finds its solution by the child suddenly

"growing together" both in body and soul and thereby getting to a new plateau in the development. What is seen as the danger in this special stage, is the feeling of guilt over the set goals and actions which produces surplus energy. The independency concerns itself with keeping possible rivals at bay. Often a jealousy rage is directed towards younger siblings' misbehavior. The climax of the fight is the first priority of the mother. Deborah has a sister who was born at the time of her illness, and it is likely that Deborah has had strong feelings for the sister that she has experienced as non-acceptable feelings. This may have caused additional difficulty for her in handling the challenges in this stage.

Deborah experienced pain in the vagina and abdomen related to the tumor and the surgery. It can be argued that her illness and what it involved can have been seen as a punishment and caused stagnation in further development. This is the stage for the castration complex, and it is described as an intense fright of having the genitals, which are now energetically eroticized, damaged as a punishment for the fantasies following the arousal. And it is exactly this stage Erikson sees as the most fatal for the separation and transformation in the emotional power station. He expresses strongly that this stage carries the seed to a dignified human existence on the one hand or the view of total destruction on the other.

As a ten year old, Deborah moved to the city. Her father is sick, and the economy is bad. It can be assumed that Deborah at this time is experiencing a strong outside pressure through the family's situation, the father's illness and the move to the city. She finds it hard to fit in and she is bullied at school by other peers.

According to Erikson, this outer pressure is at a stage where work capacity is developed. The danger here is the feeling of inferiority and inadequacy. Not only the mastering, but also gaining acceptability in your surroundings is seen as important. If the child is met with disparagement, it can loose its hope of work within the community, and the child can be placed back in the more familiar rivalry in the oedipal stage. Deborah, who is assumed to have experienced considerable challenges in previous important stages, is thereby less prepared to move further in her development. What she is experiencing, both in the family and the school situation, must be presumed to add further wounds and inhibitions. The text does not say anything about the school performance, but states that she scores high on the intelligent tests. Even if she managed well in her

subjects, the difficulties she is having with bullying would presumably hinder her development additionally.

In the next stage, the one Deborah is in now, we get to know that she is attempting suicide and has great problems in functioning. This is the stage where previously explored developmental crises are being tested. It is the time when the trust in the inner connection or identity acquired in earlier stages, is agreeable to the identity given by the surroundings. The danger here can be role confusion. In the case of Deborah it can be seen from this perspective that at this stage she is especially exposed. She has now come to a situation where so many difficulties and unprocessed experiences are linked to the previous stages that she appears with serious physiological illnesses and has attempted to end her life.

The defense mechanisms which are described in the meeting with the therapist can be seen as a method of isolating emotions and intellect, and a rational reaction towards oneself and others. Her behavior in the conversation can be interpreted as intellectualization. By the use of such a defense mechanism it can seem like the emotions are disconnected.

Similarities and differences in psychosocial work and psychoanalysis

The psychoanalysis will focus on using various tools to be able to reach the unconscious. The tool is conversation, and the treatment is often long-term. Gradually one will approach the problems in order to process them. The interaction will be a long-term analysis and conversation. This will influence the work where treatment of the psychological illness is the primary task.

The social worker, however, is often authorized for work which is linked to the outside world. In addition to supporting and helping the client through conversation, often the aim is to get the client connected to community institutions and to work on this relationship. A social worker in contact with Deborah would probably, through her mandate, also be focused on her relationship with school and future education, as well as the relationship with peers and the family. Both the professional background in social work and the mandate will lead the focus more towards the here-and-now situation and the future. Psychosocial work has developed within a context with more short-term contacts and more focus on the social environment and the present situation as

opposed to psychotherapy. Even though the understanding of Deborah's problems and what is behind it is based on her history and is tied to psychodynamic theory, the measures and action taken will be more influenced by the situation today and the relations to the outside world than what happens in psychoanalysis. The social worker though is very supportive in conversations where dangerous thoughts and feelings to others are revealed. In psychosocial work a safe and trustworthy relationship is weighted heavily and Deborah will be encouraged to be upfront with the dangerous and difficult feelings to find new ways to deal with them. However, a focus only on this combined with a long-term treatment contract, would not be found in what we call psychosocial work.

Both the mandate and the professional tradition are in this way showing us how they make the focus and the interaction different from a "pure' therapist tradition, even though psychodynamic theory is prominent also in social work.

Criticism of psychodynamic theories in social work

The criticism of psychodynamic theories was especially strong at the beginning of the 1970s. It was argued that the social problems of individuals and groups were obscured by individualization. The problems were limited to each individual and their specific context, and support was given to each person or the family. This method, argued the critics, removed the social problems from both social conditions and politics. The problems were individualized instead of being made a collective responsibility.

Stafseng (1982: 93) illustrated in the figure below the main differences between politicizing and privatizing methods and the different terms being used accordingly:

Politicising methods	Privatising methods
Similarity	"Watching" (audience)
Collectivizing	Individualization
Context	Individual/person
Integration	Isolation
Non- dramatization	Dramatisation
Openness	Closed

Individualization was being criticized on the same grounds as the critique of diagnosing: one is viewing the client as an object. The one who is giving the diagnosis becomes the expert and the one concerned is at the mercy on the one who has knowledge and is in a role where this is possible. Implicit in this criticism lays an ideal about value-neutrality and the neutral social worker. Aalen Leenderts (1995) on the other hand points out the pitfalls of such an ideal in practice. If an approach requires value-neutrality this in itself can lead to "blind spots".

The principle of transference has been criticized because of its direct link to psychiatric terminology and for creating a parent/child relationship between the client and the social worker. Virginia Robinson belongs to the first group, those criticizing the principle of transference because of its strong link to psychiatry which became popular when psychodynamic theory was relatively new in social work. She gives the following criticism of the transference principle (Biestek 1972: 14) in "A Changing Psychology in Social Case Work" (1930)

It is derived directly from psychiatric terminology and makes the social worker dependent on another profession. It creates confusion, rather than making social workers analyse their own methods and what distinguishes it from other professions.

This criticism states that the profession already had a strong emphasis on the client-social worker relationship when psychodynamic theory entered casework, and that the old tradition was made 'invisible' by using terminology such as "transference" which is heavily linked to psychoanalyses and thereby another profession.

Another criticism is the disempowering of clients by relating the social worker/client relationship to that of parents/children relationship. By using this picture, from childhood upbringing and what is seen as creating a good environment to grow up in, the social worker is placed in a role as an 'educator' to teach the clients to better handle their unconscious conflicts. This criticism was very strong in the 70ies.

Resistance is another important term linked to psychodynamic theory. The more difficult the unconscious conflicts, the more resistance the client will show when one is getting close to matters related to the topic. The fact that this resistance

has roots in the unconscious, it is assumed that the client him/herself does not have a full overview of the meaning. The critics have argued that this can lead to the client not being taken seriously. Because the unconscious is playing such an important part, there will always be a search for unconscious mental processes which can provide other meanings and interpretations than what the client is expressing. By this, the social worker is given a powerful position because in the service of the resistance it can be legitimate to pursue areas further that the client has resisted to continue with. One can reject the client's viewpoint by focusing on how the client is saying this, for example if they are angry or upset.

Psychodynamic models emphasize the importance of the unconscious processes on a person's functioning and development. At times, helping the client's development will be in conflict with what the conscious part of the personality is prepared for. Therefore, a lot of attention is given to keeping this balance.

Summary: Characteristics in psychodynamic theories in social work.

Main characteristics in psychodynamic theory in social work

- The unconscious is assumed to be playing a vital role in behaviour, thoughts and feelings.

- The personality is seen as consisting of three parts: the id, the ego and the superego which are all in a dynamic relationship.

- Experiences in childhood are seen as especially important in the development of the personality.

- Unsolved conflict-filled experiences and traumatic incidents will be consigned to the unconscious.

- Defence mechanisms are a way of dealing with difficulties

- The developmental crises, which are ongoing throughout life, have in them the possibility of both growth and stagnation.

- Good psychological health is characterised by being able to free oneself from unconscious conflicts and tensions.

- Ego strength is evaluated by how independently human beings can act, how energetic and how much character they have and if they can delay the gratification of needs and impulses and understand others needs.

- Essential in a good interaction with others is to see other people as separate from oneself, and see them as complex persons and not judge them in a black and white way of thinking.

- In psychodynamic models in social work there are often other theories integrated, often systems theory, which are used to understand the individual's relationship to the pressure of the outer world.

Action models and the social worker – client relationship

- A great emphasis is placed on the gathering of information to obtain a holistic picture.

- Concerned about bringing conflicts to the surface and work through them

- It is crucial t o create a climate which is accepting of the client

- The goal of the work is to process previous conflicts (also unconscious ones), increase ego- strength and find new and more appropriate adjustments to the surroundings and own life

- Resistance and defence mechanisms are cause for interpretations

- The client is to be seen as a unique person with a unique history

- Often the attention is directed towards the social environment and the system the individual is a part of in order to reduce outer pressure.

Value orientation

- The human being is seen as a product of ego, biological *and* social processes.

- Influenced by psychological determinism where the reasons can be found in previous experiences and the personality's handling of these

- To a certain extent an emphasis on ego's possibilities of more active influence in mental processes and new creations

Criticism

- Concealing of the connection between society and the problems by focusing on the inner processes and the personality's handling of the surroundings.

- The professional worker can be too much of an 'expert'; the client is being disempowered

- Uneven power distribution is made invisible by the interpretation of a different view as "resistance"

Chapter 3:
Interactionist theories

Introduction

Interactionism is a collective term where the interaction between people is central. People's and subject's interpretations and understanding of the situation are in focus. In the interpersonal contact then, it becomes especially interesting how one subjectively forms opinions of situations, which again influences the actions one performs. This can be related to a humanistic perspective so as to place the human or the client in focus, something which is an essential part of the common set of values in social work.

In the first part of this chapter we present the theoretical stages within phenomenology and symbolic interactionism; the roots that provide the central understanding within interactive models in social work. These philosophical and sociological schools of thought are interested in how one can understand phenomenon in society and the situations we are a part of. We start with phenomenology as a philosophical theory. Here one is interested in how one gets knowledge about the outer reality. Phenomenology within sociology is interested in how we as humans subjectively contribute to the creation of the world we are a part of. One is interested in human's experiences from daily life. Another theory within sociology is symbolic interaction. This is a theoretical perspective within sociology which is developed by George Herbert Mead, and he emphasises the importance of symbols and language in all human interaction. The interpretative part is important in this school of thinking. When we act we cannot put our own values in brackets as we can do when we philosophically and socially want to understand what is happening in a situation.

Social work is an action-oriented discipline, and it is therefore impossible to be content just because one has understood a situation. It is also necessary to have thoughts about how to act in various situations. The schools we present under the heading "the area of social work practice" focus more towards the situation of action. We will start with the roots in the area of interactionist theory in social work, which we can trace back to Jane Adams. She was a part of the Chicago School of Sociology, which is the environment where symbolic interactionism

arose. She is known for emphasising society-oriented social work, and she has tried to look at how the "client" viewed the situation. We will then present humanistic models in social work that are strongly based on humanistic psychology. Here the starting point is the human's own subjective experience, and one is preoccupied with creativeness and self-expression. Further on we will describe Lawrence Schulman's interactive approach in social work. The Skills of Helping Individuals, Families, and Groups (Schulman 1992) was used as a textbook in social work and lines drawn from both Jane Adams and humanism can be seen. Further we will reflect on how phenomenology and symbolic interactionism provide us with slightly different focuses when we enter the field of social work. The first tradition points at the close relation between those who give and receive care, while the other one is also preoccupied with the third part of the situation. This can be case-circumstances, which are relevant to various systems the social worker is operating within. Finally in this part of the chapter we will point at a central value within interactive models. That is about showing respect for the interpreter's subjective understanding of the situation.

When at the end of this chapter we analyse a literary text from "White Niggers" by Ambjørnsen, we will try to use concepts both from what we have characterized as the roots of interactionist theories and from the more active oriented parts within the field of social work.

An interactionist understanding of a situation at the social security office

In interactionism it is central to grasp each individual's interpretation of the situation where the interaction is taking part. Through communication we are creating a picture of our self and others. We will finish this introduction by bringing up an interactive episode, which shows how one negotiates what the definitions of the situation centres around. A central starting point is that when we define a situation as real, then this definition of the situation causes real consequences, even if the understanding of the situation was "wrong" from the beginning. A sentence that captures some of the core matter of an interactionist way of thinking is what we call the Thomas-theorem:

When humans define a situation as real, then it is real in its consequences. (Thomas 1928 in Charon 1992)

Berit, a client, feels that she is not being listened to, and she says that the people at the social security office more and more often come with various utterances saying that they are the one making the decisions. She feels she is seen as someone who does not have much to answer back with. She says she finds it difficult to tell them what she wants.

From the view of the social security office, they are offering her help that they know she is sceptical about, but they see as the best for her. The offer of a support person is seen by the social security office as a positive thing for a family member, while the client interprets this as a sign that she is regarded as a bad mother. This rings alarm bells for the client and she is thinking of a possible child welfare case: "Watch out for them" she is telling herself. When Berit interprets the situation as Social Security is "after her and wants to get the child welfare involved", this leads her to be skeptical of accepting the offer of a support person. She says no thanks to what could have been a real assistance for her.

The definition of the situation is decisive for how the interaction between the client and the social curator turns out. From the social worker's point of view it seems strange that the client does not want assistance in a tiring everyday life situation. From the point of view of the client it is seen as provocative that she herself is not allowed to decide if she wants a support person or not. She defines this as meaning that there must be something behind this imputative compulsory help.

From this approach we can set up the interaction schematically as shown in Table 2. Here the different interpretations of the situation, consequences and opinions with the interaction from the client's and the social worker's point of view are shown.

Table 2. Client and social worker define the situation differently.

	Definition of the situation	Consequences	Interaction
Client	To be offered a support person is seen as a sign that she is a bad mother. There is a danger that the child welfare might be involved	Does not want the assistance that a support person represents.	Stop nagging about a support person. This is received as forced help and that she is not listened to.
Social worker	The offer of a support person is seen as best for the client. There is no longer need to consider child welfare in this case.	Wants to provide more of this form of support, for example a full time network-employee.	She was happy afterwards, for the assistance that we offered. She does not know what is best for her.

The communication between them "gets stuck" if they both only consider their own definition of the situation. The first challenge they encounter is in reaching the same wavelength in defining situations. They need to come to a common definition of the situation that forms a "working agreement" and that leads them to "a working relation". This is a definition of the situation which can be lived with for future cooperation. This type of agreement means that they will stand together in a process. We can say that they have "developed a relation" between each other. We cannot say that they have developed a "working agreement" or a "working relation" – which can be unspoken as well – if one of the parts experience the relationship as so difficult that she or he wants to "run off" or "define themself out of the situation". To be able to develop a working cooperation presupposes that there is not too big a conflict between the client's and the social worker's experience of the situation. We cannot walk "in another's shoes as long as he is walking in them", so we will have to imagine how the other person feels in this particular situation. The interactional endeavour to understand the other's perspective is also about trying to understand the other's self-understanding and social identity. If client and social worker are to develop a

good working relationship, the first step in this process that they need to negotiate is what the interactional situation should consist of.

Origins and theoretical stages

Phenomenology

Central questions in phenomenology are what should be seen as reality and how people get their knowledge about the outer reality. One is preoccupied about what leads people's attention towards something special. Phenomenology was created by the Czech- German philosopher Edmund Husserls (1859–1938). He wanted to develop a science about the structural processes of our consciousness, a science about consciousness (Moe 1994: 143). Phenomenology is defined as a philosophical school, which begins with the individual and his/her conscious experiences, and tries to avoid earlier opinions, prejudices, preconceptions or philosophical dogma. Phenomenology examines phenomenon, as they are immediately understood by the social actor.

"Cogito ergo sum" – I think, therefore I am, said the philosopher Descartes. Husserls was influenced by this, but he developed this thinking further and became preoccupied with what the thinker is thinking about. This is shown in the sentence: "I think, therefore I think about something" (Foellesdal 1993: 186). In this way of thinking the concept from the introduction about reaching an intersubjective "working-agreement" that defines the situation for both of the participants in the interaction, is less dominant here. Husserls was interested in how we ascribe meaning to something, and that our thoughts are directed towards what we define as meaningful. If we have as a starting point, that how I define the situation is the way it will influence my actions (the Thomas – theorem), so will the phenomenology also be preoccupied by, for example, hallucinations. If I see a pillar in front of me, then my action is governed by the meaning it has for me. Even though there is no pillar, it will be a "real" pillar for my actions – because I will walk around it. It is therefore interesting to understand the meaning I create based on my perceptions.

Phenomenology is involved in how the world constitutes itself in our consciousness, and it is not concerned with what does, or does not, exist in the real world. It is the meaning in the phenomenon that one is interested in. The

world becomes minimised as a counterpart to our "thinking actions". It is we who constitute the world. (Føllesdal 1993: 182)

Heidegger, who was a student of Husserls, says that phenomenology is "to let what is shown, being seen as itself as it is shown" (Tjønneland 1993: 191). Heidegger argues that there is an understanding in everything we do, even though we cannot thematise it as understanding or grasp it rationally through thinking. His philosophy is that we do not understand the meaning of things in isolation, but as a part of our common dealings with them.

When phenomenology is to make a starting point for practical health – and social work, it is relevant to ask if this school is too little focused on problem solving as providing "recipes" and prescriptions for practical work. Phenomenology is first and foremost a philosophical school. To act in a daily life situation, which demands ongoing and sometimes quick decisions is not the philosopher's strong point. As the philosopher in the book "Sophie's world" says:

Sophie, if there is one thing I want this course to teach you, it's not to jump to conclusions. (Gaarder 1994: 264, translated by Moeller: 1995: 210)

The way of thinking in phenomenology has influenced various disciplines. Roughly it can be said that one is interested in what is "inside the human's mind", or how each of us constitutes what we see as real and as our social order. The essentials for phenomenology are our perceptions, and what is "happening to us". We are consciously directed towards what we can interpret as meaningful. An action gets meaning and direction through the individual's interpretation. Meaning is socially and relatively constructed. In phenomenology the starting point begins with the person who creates meaning.

Ethnomethodology

In sociology, phenomenology represents a school of thought which is preoccupied with the experiences we get as members of society, and how we use these. This school is called ethnomethodology; "ethno" meaning people. In this school of thinking one is interested in capturing the methods that are used in everyday life to create order and meaningful interactions. This form of phenomenology is, for example, relevant for practical social work – when we are studying "a professional

justifiable use of discernment". In a court case the members of the jury argue based on their roles as members of society. They do not check if the knowledge they use is applicable in each single case. The knowledge is something they take for granted – "something that everybody knows". The members of the jury use their discretion and their daily life knowledge in a methodical way. Social situations – the environment – are not something "out there" independent of the jury members. It is the jury members, who produce the parts of the social situation that are important to show what they them self are doing. In that way they perform their duty as jury members. When one systematically studies what these jury members are doing, one could say that one is studying "peoples own methods". These procedures are the ones that people use to create an orderly and meaningful reality.

This phenomenological school asks us to take the role of the stranger, place in brackets what we have learnt from earlier on, and go to the phenomenon with an open mind. We do this by questioning what we have taken for granted. In this school one does "experiments" as, for example, bringing a conversation to an abrupt halt to more systematically find out what methods people use to get the conversation started again.

The starting point is that the world we are living in is socially constructed. Feminists for example question "taken for granted opinions": why is it natural that women, even though they are breast feeding, take the responsibility to raise children? When we construct the world in other ways and looking at things differently, then we can try defining other realities as natural as well. In social gatherings there is a lot we take for granted – most of the time we understand when other people are joking, and we don't need to say that we are only joking. Humans make the assumption that the social reality is a "factual reality" that is understood in the same way by all. For example, when a family member seems to see the reality different from others, then we ask what is wrong with this person – this non-conformist. We show that we know what it means to be a part of a family by our daily methods. In this sociological tradition one is preoccupied with the individual and the interpretive subject. Individuality is a social term, which refers to a context; to that social sounding board that humans understand and act upon. (Moe 1994: 127)

Garfinkle (1967) who is the father of ethnomethodology is especially interested in how people interpret situations and how we find meaning in what we and others are doing. To find or create meaning can be understood as reaching a definition of the situation, an understanding of the reality that is common enough for our practical duties. (Album 1995: 241)

Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a perspective that focuses on the interaction between the individual and society more than the person themself or society itself. Here one tries methodically to get the participants interpretation of the interaction. One sees humans as searching for meaning in life, and it becomes essential how participants in the relationship interpret meaning into the situation.

Leading sociologists as Weber, Simmel, Mead and Goffman can be related to the symbolic- interactionism – perspective. They were involved in society in different ways, such as Weber's fright of the bureaucracy's iron cage, or the western rationality that gets out of hand. Mead was involved in the active Chicago-Sociology School, and participated in various forms of protest campaigns.

Symbolic interactionism is also influenced by "pragmatic" philosophy, where one is interested in the aspect of actions and what is seen as "useful". It is Man who decides what should be considered as social reality.

Symbolic interactionism has developed in various areas as deviation, organisation, culture, socializing and identity development. There is a common understanding across these areas that both "society" and "the self" are central to understand symbolic interactionism. These terms are abstractions from the ongoing interaction, and they have no independent existence outside interactionism. (Stryker 1980: 2)

Mead's socializing theory

The most central book within symbolic interactionism is *Mind, Self and the Physical World* (Mead 1934) The Self as socially created is central in this book. One can identify "I" and "me" as phases in the development of the self. They are separate, but belong together as a whole. "I" is the spontaneous, impulsive and "subjective" reaction. "Me" is more the "objective", reflective, retrospective and

the outside perspective of oneself. The "I"-part of the self makes for a self-conscious person, while the "me"-part makes us more like others. The separation of I and Me is in the thought process, and the reflection and dynamics between them are part of the process of socialising us as personalities. (Mead 1934: 182) We develop the self by taking others perspective, and especially important are other "important people", such as mum and dad, and these people are called "significant others". Examples of such socializing are children's development through the stages of imitation, play and role-play. Gradually people develop what we call the "generalized other" which constitutes the norms we live by.

Even though symbolic interactionism is consequently social in its thinking, one has a perspective where one sees people as active creators of their own life. So it can be difficult to predict how people will act. The thought-based separation of "I" and "Me" is essential to the understanding of the new way of behaving. If one had not had those two phases there wouldn't have been any deliberate responsibility and no new experiences (ibid: 178). It is in the "I"-phase where the new, the initiative and freedom can be found. (Ibid: 177) We are not only formed by the place we have in society for example, or from directly stimuli from other people. We interpret and innovate the information, which we gather, focus on and deliberate on, before we pass it on. We can also talk about "having conversations with our self".

To take different perspectives is something we do in interactions with different "selves", which we can see as different identities. We have different identities in regard to different reference groups in society. (Charon 1992: 34). We are parents, friends, travel association members, pub goers, work -colleagues, unemployed etc. etc.

The view of human life in interactionism is oriented towards the present and sees that Man has the capability of innovation and reorientation. One emphasizes that human beings are born as social beings. One emphasizes the need to understand people's particular subjective experience of the situation. It can be questioned how a person can have a picture of themselves both as "I" and "Me", and what the emphasize is of these two aspects of the self. In interactionism we see identity as something we can "negotiate" about, and that identity can change. Identity establishes what and where our place is socially. Do the "label" one gives oneself

and the "label" other people give us correspond? We acquire identity when other people give us the same label as we give ourselves. This is an understanding of the term identity, which emphasizes the agreement between oneself and other people's opinions of us; that is to say something that can be confirmed in a relationship. If one were educated as a child welfare worker, one could not call oneself a public health worker without expecting reactions. But as a social educator one would have a more flexible identity between health work and social work. Identity can be seen as more extensive than a role, and by that we can grasp the meaning (Dahle 1990).

Both within the tradition of interactionism and within the psychodynamic models, one is preoccupied by the "individual" and how one develops a picture of the self and an identity. In interactionism a person can be influenced by being "mirrored" in the image others have of them. It is not determined from childhood or from the unconscious how one is going to act – but the actual interaction with others in here and now situations is part of creating the picture I develop of my self.

Blumer and the interpretation of symbolic forms

Herbert Blumer (1900–1987) was a student of Mead, and it was he who introduced the term symbolic interactionism. The interpretative side is essential in this school of thinking. To grasp something we interpret it into one or another symbolic form. A door can be seen as an expression of architectonic style, or it can be an emergency exit. A closed or open door can be interpreted as a signal for how available or contact seeking we are. A distinctive characteristic in this thinking is the analysis of symbolic forms or the meaningful social phenomenon (Musolf 1992).

There are however many things in the interaction between people, such as habits, gestures and the unconscious; which belong to an implicit or silent pole. What I will do here is to relate to the consciousness, what we can differentiate and indicate in ourself. In the light of Mead's (1934) division of non-significant and significant symbols, Blumer (1969) calls it symbolic interactions when we interpret action and give meaning to what we see. When we interact, we interpret meaning into each other's actions. Blumer says that human interaction is about being able to make our actions fit together by giving each other signs, and interpreting these signs.

A central part of symbolic interactionism is the emphasis on the interaction one has with oneself, when one forms objects from things one notices. To simplify, Blumer (ibid: 10) uses three categories of objects or symbolic forms: "Physical objects" can be a chair, three or pushbike. "Social objects" are roles as student, mother and friend. As examples of "Abstract objects" Blumer introduces moralistic principals, ideas such as justice, exploitation or passion. It is possible to think that many times the relationship between the client and the social worker can appear confusing, because the client for example interprets money as a physical and concrete object. It means that with a certain amount of money one can pay the house rent. But, the social worker interprets money more as an abstract object: Money is a mean to reach a goal in the social welfare law, to provide help to self-help. When the social worker interprets the situation as being that the client has tried in all possible ways to pay the rent, then the client receives the money as an abstract object and a sign that he/she has shown a will to manage by them self. However, the client interprets money as something he/she is entitled to. For the client it is not important that they are seen as deserving of the welfare. It is possible that long time clients understand "the game" and understand that money is not a concrete right, but more an abstract object. Blumer (1969: 22) says that one also needs to respect the obdurate character of the empirical world, which can "talk back" to us and challenge the pictures, concepts and opinions we make about the world. There are limits to how well we can talk ourselves out of the fact that it matters if the client gets paid 500 or 1500 Kr (Norwegian crowns) in social welfare. We can here see that symbolic interactionism challenges purely phenomenological or idealistic positions, which do not consider the "factual realities" or "the obdurate character" in the world.

Goffman and the social drama

Erving Goffman is, as are Mead and Blumer, interested in people's interpretation of each other and the intention we have for our actions. Goffman is influenced mostly from Mead. This is clear in his focus on the social side of the self, which is expressed in the book "The presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1959). In The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life he discusses the concept 'Role' and places human conduct within a theatrical frame. He focuses on how we try to control the impressions other people have of us ("impression management"). He uses two terms from theatrical drama, "front" and "back stage". "Front" is the

part of our behaviour, which "defines the situation" for those watching. This is about gender, clothes, positions, manner of speaking and body language. Goffmann states that we for example have more restrictions on women's "front" that on men's. "Front" is everything that is observed by the audience; it is here that one tries to "manipulate" others and act out "impression management". "Backstage" is where one can "be oneself", relax and practice new habits. In journalism one uses the expression "off the record" as the information one gives that doesn't bear close scrutiny and is only a part of the background information between the interviewer and the interviewee. Here one says what one really means.

In the interaction between us we are interested in the type of situation we are a part of; what we need to know about the other and which parts of our self we need to act out. Let us imagine a situation where we have finished a job interview. The person that interviewed us invites us into their office, takes off their jacket, puts their feet on the table and starts to talk about private relations that are not directly related to the earlier interview situation. We will ask questions such as: What's happening now? Why have we been invited into this "change of scene?" From the outside it is clear that we now have been invited "back stage", but we will still have difficulty in defining the situation. Has the scene changed, or is it a continuation of the interview situation? There is an eternal fight on the various scenes about the authorization of the interpretation of the situation between the different parties, such as between clients and social workers. Goffmann has been criticized for being too cynical when he is analyzing social life, and that there is too little room for "trust" in the dramaturgical picture. Life is more than a theatre stage. However, Goffmann does not view this as being the best method. In his later work it can be seen that the dramaturgical, analytical method is one step towards finding fruitful, analytical methods for social interaction (Manning 1992: 55). First and foremost, Goffmann was preoccupied with relations and situations where one is face to face with the other, and he was fascinated by the difference between what can be seen and what is actually there "in reality".

As in phenomenology, it is central in symbolic interactionism how the individuals interpret the world. However, here there is a greater emphasis on how we are socially created with essential concepts such as intercommunication, inter subjectivity and language. This perspective is an empirical tradition where one to

a greater extent is interested in examining various fields rather than the emphasis that can be found in more philosophical opinions within "pure" phenomenology. There is also greater emphasis placed on "the world exists in itself", even though interactionism is preoccupied with interpretation and interaction with what we see as meaningful phenomenon.

The socially constructed reality?

The performance in the relationship between client and social worker takes place in context. We can call such contexts communities, which can be smaller or bigger, for example the Nordic region, the Norwegian society, local communities or a small community like a workplace. It is the interaction between people in a specific context that creates a society. By this it can be said that society is constructed by humans. In interactionism one is interested in making clear how people are a part of the "decision making", or construct what is to be valid for a society. A workplace can, for example, just be a place where we receive salary and give as little as possible of our self, while another workplace is a place that is important for our whole wellbeing. We think a lot about what's happening there, and we tie this workplace to honor and interest. We identify ourself with this workplace, and we are identified by it. The workplace becomes an important place for us. In this way we are creating many communities where interaction between people is central. Such processes are described in the book Social Construction of Reality written by the sociologists of knowledge Berger and Luckman (1966). They define reality as a phenomenon that exists independently from our will, and knowledge is being convinced of the fact that some phenomenon exists. (ibid:13) Sociology of knowledge, presented by these authors, is preoccupied with three processes which present knowledge as reality.

The first is called the externalization process. The moment for externalization is when one is a part of constructing something in a dialectical process. Related to Mead's socialization theory, externalization is linked with the "I" phase in the social self. The individuals construct society (Wallace and Wolf 1991: 314). Man is here creative and able to react to his/her own reality.

In the next process we understand our daily life as being structured, and a more organized world confronts us. Through the processes, which Berger and Luckman call objectification processes, society appears as an objective reality. This happens

through role development and institutionalization. The origin of the role is in habits, and they arise as soon as a common knowledge storage is found, which consists of a reciprocal type of behavior (Berger and Luckman ibid: 93). All institutionalized behavior results in roles. Habit formations are important in social life, because they free people from always having to think and make choices. Strengths are released. Central in the objectification is that through an essential tool such as language, one is a part of making a collective and shared world. That is to say that it stands as something firm, objective and given. Society becomes an objective reality.

The third process is that society as subjective reality is created via internalization processes. We take it up and make it to our own. For example, we identify ourselves as being social workers because we are involved with social work. In other words, Man is a social product. This is about humans as being a social project, and that they go through socialization, which is a comprehensive and lasting control mechanism. This leads the human into society's objective world. (ibid:154). Primary socialization happens in childhood. Secondary socialization is a later process, where a socialized individual becomes socialised into new sectors of society (ibid: 154). Secondary socialization is internalizing of institutional realities; as for example socialising into a new workplace. Successful socializing means there is a high degree of symmetry between objective and subjective reality. With unsuccessful socializing one asks: "Who am I?" "What am I doing here?"

We have seen that the view of society in interactionism is that people in interaction create society. Especially in the externalization process, people have the possibility to be subjectively creative. In the objectification process, "me" and the object side of the self is central. Even though the objectification is central in the internalization process, one can to a greater degree say that both "I" and "me"-sides of the self are operating in a dynamic way.

By approaching these processes and reinterpreting situations, as for example giving each other new roles, this can give quite an optimistic view of society. In this perspective, people "get" a good possibility of influencing processes in society. We can also interpret this as a view of society that can lay responsibility for the development of society on people. The world isn't only something given, our institutions are made by interaction and they can be improved by interaction.

By defining situations as different, our opinion of society and what we regard as the truth can be influenced to a great extent.

The field of social work

Jane Addams, the pioneer

Jane Addams (1860–1935) was a highly determined women in American history, and passionate about society. Addams worked to abolish child labour in industry and limit working hours for women and young people. In 1919 she set up the international women's league for peace and freedom, and she was president of the league until her death. In 1931 she received the Nobel piece prize. She was prominent in the founding of Hull House, a centre for Social Welfare in Chicago, in 1889. The Centre was a part of the settlement movement, where social problems were defined as more society based than in the casework tradition. In social work, the necessity to be aware of the kind of society one is a part of, is a concept generally attributed to Addams. However, she didn't have the same impact on the development of social work as Mary Richmond (Franklin 1986). Goldstein writes that this settlement movement did not lead to any direct influence on theory or practice within professional social work. Addams wrote eleven books and hundreds of articles (Deegan 1988: 6). If one compares Richmond's Social Diagnosis (1917) with Addams's Democracy and Social Ethics (1964), Richmond writes according to the plan for how a social worker should act, while Addams is more skeptical than Richmond of making a profession of social work. Addams emphasizes group work where one is more interested in mobilising people's own resources and letting them find their own solutions (Goldstein 1973: 26).

The tradition to which Addams belonged was closely linked to the Chicago School in Sociology (cf. Dewey, Mead and Thomas among others), and was later called symbolic interactionism. Jane Addams was of the opinion that one had to understand the way poor people were thinking and not focus only on their financial situation. Because of this inner perspective, Trost (1992) places Addams as one of the founders within symbolic interactionism.

The Chicago School in Sociology was preoccupied with changing the work so that practical consequences ensued. Here the sociologist and social worker Jane Addams was a representative for those who were most successful in this. She

used various scientific methods to support her social political plans and ideas, before professional and political audiences. Generally it was a hallmark of the female sociologists that they were more interested in the "utility value" of research and loyalty to practice, than in pure theory development and the pursuit of contact with scholars and university environment.

At the university in Chicago they wanted to get a closer connection with Hull House as a centre belonging to the settlement movement: "As a group, the male sociologists tended to interpret the social settlement as a 'sociological laboratory'"(Deegan 1988: 34). Addams opposed the use of the word "laboratory" for ideological reasons. This makes people appear to be "isolated things" in a laboratory. Addams rejected an offer to connect Hull House in an organizational way to the university.

For Addams, social work was a form of sociology, and she was a member of the American Sociological Society (ASS). In the Chicago school the men were expected to be the ones interested in abstract thinking, while the women were the "practical thinkers". Because Addams became identified as a social worker many people did not consider her as a sociologist (Deegan 1988: 8). She could only belong to one or the other of these groups. Addams was living and working during a time when neither sociology nor social work was well developed as disciplines. This explains to some extent why it was difficult for theorists to handle professionals who wanted to combine these disciplines, and who tried to maintain a double identity as both social worker and sociologist.

While Addams belonged to the pioneers among female sociologists, Jessie Taft (1882–1961) belongs to the next generation, which worked in the point of intersection between these two disciplines. Deegan (1987) calls the generation Taft belonged to as the professionals. Pioneers and professionals worked together. They were drawn to the new field of sociology and practical orientation, which developed with the alliance between sociology and society. (Deegan 1987: 357). However, after a while these female sociologists were identified as social workers, and the "golden era" for female sociologists came to an end. (ibid)

Taft had G.H Mead as her supervisor when she did her doctor's degree in sociology. She has also translated books by Otto Rank. Taft combined terms used

by Mead and Rank in the development of symbolic interactional therapy in social work by women and children. While Mead was more cognitively preoccupied with thought processes and rational development of the self, Taft combined this with Rank's use of the term the "will"; the will to be free and creative, which comes from both emotional and rational strengths (Deegan 1987). This schematic insight into Taft's theory may be a sign that she was ahead of her time in her "version" and "critique" of symbolic interactionism: That this tradition has placed too little emphasis on the emotional side of development of the self. Deegan (ibid) says that Taft suffered the same fate as Addams; sociologists defined her as a social worker, and her sophisticated use and development of symbolic interactionism has been overlooked totally.

Humanistic models in social work

In social work one uses "humanistic" as a collective term for models that are linked to existentialism, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and humanistic psychology (cf. Payne 1191). Symbolic interactionism is seen as a sociological perspective and as an alternative for too much of a psychological understanding of human actions. Focusing on interaction and symbols can be less emotionally demanding for client and social worker then the traditional "close" relationship (ibid:174). This perspective takes the normality and competency of the clients as a starting point, rather than focusing on the lack of adjustment and control over their own lives. In symbolic interactionism it is the interpretation of various symbols and self-reflection that is emphasized. People have greater opportunities to control their thinking via various interpretations of symbols. People have, to a great extent, control over their own life. This is a perspective that is in contrast to the psychodynamic focus of history, and previous incidents are central in determining our actions today.

Humanistic models have in common that they see people as creating meaning from their experiences, and that the social worker tries to help these people to trust their own interpretations of reality. One tries to see actions from the point of view of the person involved. This perspective is difficult to identify directly in practical social work, but the values and the ethical guidance is strongly humanistic influenced. Moreover, one sees clients as a "whole" human, and they are the focal point in social work. "Humanist therapies thus find a sympathetic fit

with social work practise" (ibid:182). The reason that those ideas have not got such an area of impact in practice, according to Payner (ibid) is that social work is carried out in offices where control and bureaucratic routines are predominant. This contrast can appear as in the phenomenologistic perspective on social work, where it is usual to look at social work as art more then a discipline of social sciences. The art experience is subjective, and it is often a great challenge to find the right words for the experience art evokes in us (Payne 1991: 172). The humanistic perspective in social work is closely related to the field of psychology and to phenomenology.

In a basic textbook of psychology (Atkinson and Atkinson et.al 1993), personality theories are divided into psychoanalytic, phenomenological and social learning theories. They link the phenomenological approach to humanistic psychology.

Three principles are central in humanistic psychology (ibid: 544–545):

- The subjective experiences that the individuals themselves have are of primary interest. On is not looking for objective descriptions. The basic question people must ask them self is: "Who am I?".

- The questions taking priority for examination are opportunities for making choices, creativity and self-assertion. Growth and self-assertion are the criteria for psychological health. Health is not only ego-control linked to the psychodynamic perspective or adaptation to the environment connected to behaviorism.

- They argue that we need to do research on important social and human problems and grasp the "meaningful". This instead of obtaining "objective" knowledge through more standardized methods. Research is not neutral.

Most essential is the dignity of the person. Humans are fundamentally good. The goal for psychology is to understand and not control or predict how a person will act. Dominant theorists linked to this perspective are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow. Rogers is interested in client centred therapy. He uses "the self" as a central term in his personality theory (ibid:546). Maslow is known for his needs pyramid where the needs are placed in a hierarchy. The most basic needs have to be satisfied before a person becomes interested in the needs higher in the

pyramid. On the top of the pyramid is the need for self-realization, and downwards are the following: aesthetic needs, cognitive needs, needs for acknowledgement, feeling of belonging, love and security, and at the bottom of the pyramid are the physical needs such as satisfying thirst and hunger (ibid: 547).

Humanistic psychology has influenced social work by focusing on the relationship in social work and the idea of self-realization. Rogers for example emphasizes that clients should expect that the social worker is (Payne 1991: 170):

• genuine and congruent in a therapeutic relation; that there is accordance between theory and practise

• without prejudices against the clients and has positive expectations

• emphasising the clients view of the world

The phenomenological perspective emphasizes the individual's own role in defining and creating their own development and / or destiny. Humans are good, and strive for growth and self-realization. Psychological health is a process and not a terminal point. This perspective sets high demands for a good life, and has been criticized for focusing too much on the individual, and on luxury needs. That is suitable for those who have the time and money to go into private therapy and to worry about the top of the needs of Maslow's pyramid.

One school of thought within humanistic psychology is gestalt therapy, which emphasizes immediate experiences of a whole (whole – gestalt). A human experiences 'wholeness', that is to say that one experiences one thing in relation to others. We experience situations and incidents as meaningful, or incomprehensible and meaningless. When we do not experience a situation as a whole, then it is not meaningful. It is an unfinished gestalt, which can appear as fruitless actions or reactions. Gestalt therapy can be seen as an exercise in being aware of the moment, and functioning in the here and now. (Ronnby 1992: 88). It is a psychology which is preoccupied with how we perceive and interpret the world around us.

Humanistic psychology is also perceived as the "third way's psychology". It is a reaction to the technical manipulative behaviorism and to the more retrospective

and passive psychoanalysis. This psychology directs interest towards the experienced person (Atkinson and Atkinson et al 1993: 77) There is an interest in an individual's inner nature, and focus is placed on how people experience themselves and their relation to others.

Shulman's interactional model for social work

A more recent representative for the interactionist tradition is Shulman (1991,1992) with his interactive theory in social work. We do not intend to provide any thorough introduction to this model, but we will describe those aspects that show that it is reasonable to refer to Shulman in this chapter.

Shulman focuses on the conduct which becomes important in social work. He also emphasizes the context. Instead of only setting up a model for social work which focuses on the client and social worker, he sets up a model with three parts as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2 In client / social worker relations one can also identify a central third part.
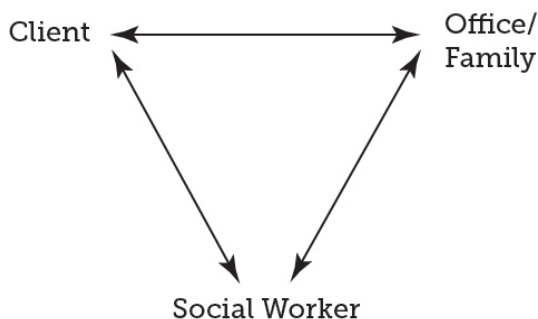
Schulman stresses it is not conduct which makes the social worker different from other professionals, but the position one holds in the work within different contexts;

A profession is not defined by its skills. It is differentiated from other professions by its functional role (Schulman 1992: 22).

It is essential that the social worker develops their role in a concrete context, their role not being defined only by general conduct. The relationship and situation in itself become central:

At the core of the international theory of social work practise is a model of the helping process in which the skill of the worker helps to create a positive working

relationship. In turn this relationship is the medium through which the worker influences the outcomes of practice. (ibid:22).

Shulman stresses that in an interactionist view one should not only study the interaction between client and context, for example family or work place, but that it becomes central to reflect upon the relationship between client and social worker. Shulman describes social work as a dynamic interaction (ibid:82). It is something that needs to develop in interaction. Therefore it becomes difficult to have as a starting point, for example, that the social worker is the expert who knows best and in that way "governs" the relationship. Shulman shows that the development of professional norms can hinder compassion in the situation. He argues that sharing emotions with the client is a sign of professionalism. Shulman criticizes the medical paradigm in emphasizing objectivity, distance and neutrality as central characteristics of professionalism. This model places the social worker in the position of choosing between a professional and a personal self, which Shulman sees as contrived opposites. Shulman uses an example where a social worker who, in a work seminar, sits in front of a client who has just realized that her child is going to die from cancer. The social worker reacts by holding the client's hand and crying with her. A supervisor who is passing by the open door calls the social worker out and tells her that she is "unprofessional" in her conduct. Shulman comments on this episode in the following way:

My view is that the worker was, at that moment, helping in one of the most important and meaningful ways that we know. She was sharing the pain with the client and, in expressing her own sorrow, was making a gift to the client of her feelings (Shulman 1992: 120).

From empirical research it was found that the social workers ability to share personal feelings and thoughts was most central in developing a good work relation and so that the social worker could be of help. (ibid:137)

Maybe one could claim that interactionism in social work, as it appears in Addams, Taft and Shulman, is more focused on emotions than symbolic interactionism as it is presented in sociology. Maybe it is more phenomenologically oriented since one emphasizes "to grasp what is shown". One has to be holistically oriented towards the situation and the relationship one

is a part of. So, in practical social work, feelings and the emotional side of the self must be a central part of what is shown, while a social scientific and analytical perspective emphasizes, to a higher degree, the intellectual and reflective side of the self.

Social work is about an interaction- and problem solving process. (cf. Shulman 1992, Johnson 1992, Askeland 1994). The social worker is to help the client in handling feelings and problems (Shulman 1991: 24). We will claim that we find movements that emphasizes one of the processes. Compton and Galaway (1984) focus on the problem solving while Shulman (1992) emphasizes the interaction process. It becomes important to be in a process where to interpret and act in interaction with what the other part is acting out is emphasized. In a training program within this model (Havnen and Sayer 2003) the participants say that they have become more aware of the importance and course of action in social work.

Shulman (ibid) has the following phases for work with clients:

1. **The preliminary phase**

•   The social worker should prepare themselves to be able to articulate the clients' thoughts and feeling as response to indirect communication. Factors that can make indirect communication are the client's ambivalence to receive help, strong emotions, taboos and the fact that the social worker through their workplace has power over the client.

•   The social worker should also prepare themselves to arrive at the same wavelength as the client, or prepare a "tuning in" as it is called in the English version of Shulman's book. Here, the social worker should try to develop empathy with the client, and define their own feelings. This is about developing skills to discuss topics related to authority, that the social worker can share their own emotions and accept the clients' emotions. When one wants to be on the same wavelength, one should, according to Shulman, prepare oneself in regard to what one knows about the group of clients generally, about this client especially and what special phase this client is in.

2. The initial phase

Central in the start phase, in the first meeting with the client is:

*   To make clear the aim of the contact by making brief opening comments about the purpose of the conversation as well as giving ideas how the social worker can be of help.

*   Clarify the role, by giving information about what sort of help the social worker can provide given the context.

*   To ask for response, which is helping the client to give "feedback" on their view of the problem – and what kind of help they want.

*   To clarify mutual expectations, which is about developing an agreement of what the client can expect from the social worker and what the social worker can expect of the client.

*   To discuss the topic of authority means to bring up professional secrecy and what stereotypes the client has of the social worker within the actual context.

*   Divide the client's problem (into smaller parts.)

*   Be supportive when the client brings up taboos.

3. The middle (working) phase

*   To strike a cord in the meeting. The skills in being where the client is.

*   To develop an agreement or contract for the actual conversation

*   The skills in getting the client to speak, narrate

*   The social worker's emphatic skills to focus on emotions in the client's experiences.

*   The social worker's ability to share emotions with the client.

- To be able to ask for contribution and effort from the client.

- The ability to gather relevant data for use in future work.

- Closing of the conversation, which can be summarizing, evaluation and discussion about what will be the next step for the client.

4. The closing phase

- To prepare the client at an early stage for the ending, so it becomes a process and not a sudden stop.

- Identify stages of 'the ending' such as sorrow, anger, negotiation, and ability to help the client to have more control over the conclusion.

- Mutual sharing of emotions between client and social worker, both the positive and negative ones.

- Identify the learning by helping the client to summarize central ideas, insight and feelings that have been brought up during the conversations. Here, the social worker honours the client's progress.

- Search for the positives and negatives that have been brought up in the relation, and achieve a balance between them so that it is not "black and white" thinking.

- Identify the next step for the client.

The institutional conversations between the different triadic relations

In a study of client conversations at social security offices (Oltedal 2000) one uses the term orientation to understand such triadic[1] relations where client and social worker talk together in an institutional context. The orientations are all simplified models of relations between client and social worker and the central case

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[1] *Orientation and triadic relations is also based on the concept of "speech genre", from the philosopher Bakthin*

circumstances they cooperate around. Both Mead and Goffman show that social situations can be described as triadic relations. This can be exemplified by two people talking together and the third party in the situation is the "case" that the interaction is centred around.

Different institutions such as Social Security offices, family-care centres, psychiatric hospitals and outreach work provide the social workers with various positions that lead to different case circumstances being in focus in the relationship between client and social worker – based on the institutional contexts they converse within. Based on a study of client conversations at Swedish Social Security offices, Fredin (1993: 187) found that the talking in social work is about converting narrations from the client's world of experiences to a bureaucratic systematic world. In the communication between client and social worker, there is a process of defining the situation and a focus on actions. It is in the tension generated by the difference between the client's appeal for help and limits to the level of welfare assistance that social security is authorized to offer, that the client's problematical situation is discursively constituted. This takes place through the parties negotiating towards a definition of the problem. (ibid:190)

Theoretically the concept of orientation is developed from using perspectives both from interactional and systems theoretical models of social work. In this context we will emphasize the interactionist dimension in the concept where the triadic element is emphasized. We can describe what is happening in practise in social work as different "third parts" alternating between being in focus in the relation between client and social worker. In one conversation they can change between different orientations as for example rights-, counselling-, investigation- and cooperation – orientation. The two last orientations can be seen in a triangle as in figure 2 in this chapter. Where Shulman describes family or office in a third part's position, the case one is cooperating about in the cooperation-orientation can be placed in this figure. While in investigation-orientation a phenomenon in the client's life situation is what one talks about together. This can be that client and social worker together make a new story or narration to understand an event in the client's life. Below we will show two triads that differ from the one Shulman has described (cf. figure 2). In the first situation (rights-orientation) the social worker has institutional power to interpret and bring into effect the law towards

the client. Clients who know the legal system can here be active in influencing the social worker to make a decision in their own interest.

Figure 3. Rights-orientation
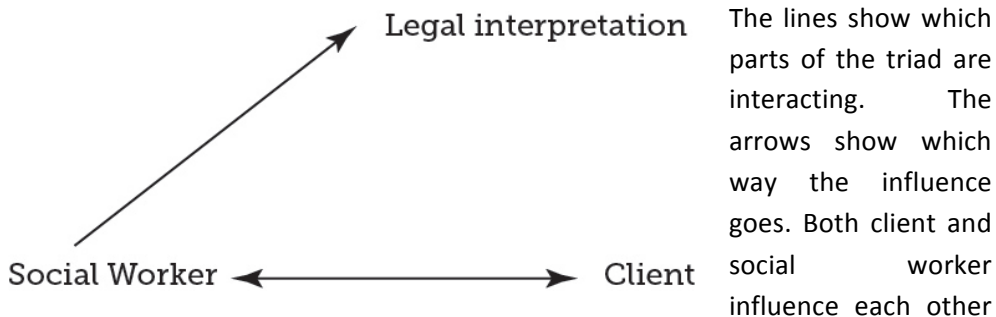
The lines show which parts of the triad are interacting. The arrows show which way the influence goes. Both client and social worker influence each other while it is only the social worker who interprets the law.

In the rights-orientation the legal interpretation is the central case circumstance. When a social worker has delegation to give financial welfare, then it is she or he that in the last instance decides if the client receives money or not, within the given framework. To make this more general we can exchange the law with norms and rules that apply to the clients at a special work place. Let us imagine that a helping authority whose aim is to get people back in work, has made rules that if the client has too big an alcohol problem then they will not be allowed to participate in the work training – program. It is in the interaction between client and social worker that the situation and the degree of the client's problem are discussed. In the last instance it is the social worker who interprets the rules for exclusion of clients in this program. The central reason why clients go to the social security office is for this kind of rights oriented help (Oltedal 2000).

In the next situation, Fig. 4 below, the social worker has to talk to and influence the client to carry out the advice the social worker provides. A client who is conscious about which areas they have right of self-determination can in the institutional conversation with the social worker try to withstand advice that they do not want to carry out. To maintain their power in this situation can be a challenge for the client. Maybe they are scared of developing a problematic relation to the social worker if they challenge the social worker's own values

about what would be a good life for the client. But in this situation it is the client, at least formally, who is in power to carry out specific advice.

This is the situation where the professional often sits with some type of special knowledge that the client seeks. To be able to reach out to the client with advice they have not asked for, it is important that the social worker find out how the client looks at the situation and starts from here. Any advice is characterized by the fact that it is the client in the last instance who decides if they want to carry out the advice, because there is no body of regulatory laws.

Figure 4 Advice-orientation
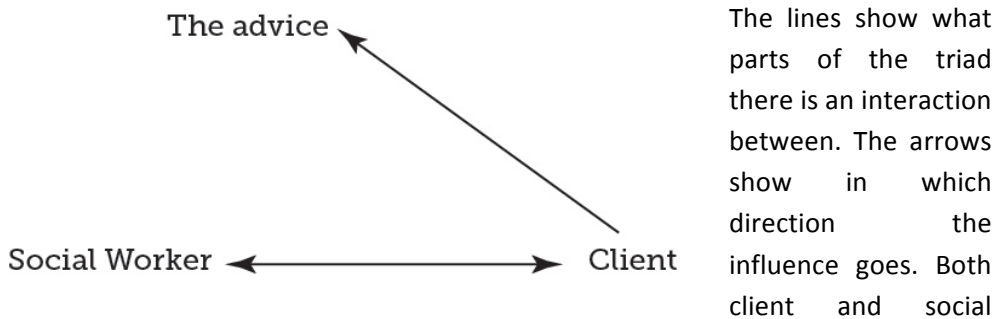
The lines show what parts of the triad there is an interaction between. The arrows show in which direction the influence goes. Both client and social worker influence each other. However, it is only the client that can carry out the advice. The advice in itself is not an interactional partner, but it is the client that implements the advice or not.

The models for these triadic relations have developed from studies of practice in social work (Shulman 1992, Oltedal 2000). In the field of health and nursing practice the concept of care is essential. Phenomenology in nursing is transformed and used in practice related to care. The word care (omsorg) is used both in public and private contexts. It is more used within public health than in social work, to describe the practice of the profession. The meaning of the word is the same in these various situations. It is about a relational action between one who gives and one who receives care. Eriksson (2003) described care in social work as to put oneself in someone's place and show one's interest in the client. He states that it is not about an institutional way to explain or value something. We interpret this to be in accordance with how care is used within caring work as a nurse. Within social work there are grounds for claiming that the tradition of symbolic

interactionism is stronger than phenomenology. We will argue that in symbolic interactionism there is greater focus on different interpretations of the social reality than what is focused on in phenomenological carework- thinking. In Shulman's interactional model it is essential to the social worker to arrive at the same wavelength as the client. It is an important part of the model that client and social worker not only meet as "free individuals", but also as representatives and members of different systems. What types of third-parts and case circumstances that develop in the relationship, are connected to the institutional framework that the social worker and client meet within.

Respect for "the other's" interpretation of their situation

Humanistic ideas have influenced values in social work. Symbolic interactionism and phenomenology makes a foundation for understanding people as more flexible, less predetermined, and one is less "judgemental" than in several other psychological ideas that are used within social work. (Payne 1991: 182).

The challenge for the social worker is to integrate personal development with a mutual professional development within social work. It can be said that one gets an exchange between wholeness and parts, between developing a common ethical debate and oneself being a moral practitioner in this overview. "Personal professional development" is a fruitful technical term to describe this dynamic:

The technical term "personal professional" points at important qualities with the role as a helper: To develop as a professional care worker is to be in a process where the personal and the mutual professions get woven into a whole (Aalen Leenderts 1995: 19).

The mutual professional values that interactionism especially can help focusing at, is to understand the client's point of view trying to realize the client's right of self determination. Further, we will also emphasize the fact that we are always interpreting each other. We must respect that we cannot claim knowing more about the other than the other know about themselves. To respect each other's individuality and characteristics is to say that we cannot capture all human life in language and social forms. The philosopher Wittgenstein is known for his statement: What one cannot talk about, one has to be quiet about". (Josefson 1991: 56). Wittgenstein emphasises the division between that which can be

articulated in language, and that which can be revealed by what is unspoken only, as the philosophers cardinal problem: "The main point is the theory about what can be articulated by the use of statements, that is to say with help from language (…) and what can not be articulated by statements, but only be shown; that is in my opinion the cardinal problem in philosophy". (Wittgenstein in Johannessen 1993: 4)

When one possesses silent or unarticulated knowledge, the point here is not that one in principal cannot reach far with expressing it in words. But articulation in itself can create a new reality, and that is why there exist choices and responsibilities in giving names to situations.

This point can be elaborated by a sincere and sad fairytale from "Sophie's world" (Gaarder 1995: 339/340 translated by Paulette Moeller): Once upon a time there was a centipede that was amazingly good at dancing with all hundred legs. The tortoise did not like this dance and to get the centipede to stop dancing she wrote the following letter:

I am a devoted admirer of your exquisite dancing. I must know how you go about it when you dance. Is it that you lift your left leg number 28 and then your right leg number 39? Or do you begin by lifting your right leg number 17 before you lift your left leg number 44? I await your answer in breathless anticipation. Yours truly, Tortoise. (ibid)

The centipede never danced again. That's the way it goes when imagination gets strangled by reasoned deliberation. (ibid:340)

What has been said is impossible to cross out and act like it has not been said. When people start by saying "It's not that I don't trust you", we often think immediately: "Oh, you don't trust me!" When one has got entangled in the communication, one never returns to the simplistic paradise of the soul (Luhmann 1993 ch. 4:11). Communication becomes something that contradicts that which is given, created or the natural order of things. Such given, universal phenomenon or conducts of life are those Løgstrup calls life-manifestations which can be about confidence, honesty or compassion. Without these the human existence will collapse. Often the way we perform social work is not formulated, however one can experience that it is formulated when one comes into conflict with moral and

ethical standards. We articulate more often when we mistrust someone than when we trust them. (Løgstrup 1982: 105) A crisis seems to be necessary before one starts talking about values. Trust is more basic than mistrust. This refers to trust given to us, and which is part of constituting us as humans. Martinsen (1993: 17) states that Løgstrup's thinking is phenomenological because he sees humans' sensations and lived experiences as central. To Løgstrup metaphysics and ethics are woven together based on the thought of creation. The fundamental phenomena that carry us, such as caring for the other, are given to us based on the notion that we are created (Martinsen 1993: 116) It becomes important to show respect for the other as a central interpreter of their own situation. If we as professionals do not become involved in the other's need to find out about their situation, we can be seen as uncommitted and indifferent. On the other hand it can be experienced as unwanted interference and infringement if we emphasize our own interpretations, of how the client should see the situation, more than the interpreter's own understanding. Professional work is about striking a happy medium by avoiding the two ditches we can end up in, if we get involved too much or too little in the situation of the client.

The perspective of human life in interactionism is linked to the fact that we create the world for each other. When we are studying what make actions good or meaningful, we can presume some universal principals we recognize or have developed intersubjectively. We ought to argue from a common human consideration for what is good for humans, not only based on our self – or what someone has told us, for example an authority person. Here, we can relate to a collective based perspective on human life, where the fundament is that we are dependant upon each other. This perspective of human life is based on what Uffe Juul Jensen calls the third way in philosophy, where one has to change position from individuality to the conduct of lives as a product of collective, universal, human practice. (Martinsen 1989: 15) The alternative is two different forms of individual conceptions. One is relativism, where I myself create my values and my worth. The other is that the values come to me from outside, what one calls essentialism.

"White niggers" – An interactionistic analysis of an episode at the social security office

Before we present the literary text, we will set up some questions to think about while reading the text. We will not give a supplementary analysis of the text answering all the questions below. However, we will show examples of interpretations of the text linked to each of these four points:

- *Identity generating people or environment*

Who are significant others for the clients? And who are significant others for the social worker? How can you see in the text that some people or environments appear to influence the social worker and client and they are important to their self-esteem, and thereby how they act in the situation? What is a common case (or a "third part") they go to the Social Security office to get help with?

- *Critical events in the different stages in the interaction*

What is happening in the preliminary, initial, work and the end phase that you recognize from Shulman's interaction model? How could the social worker have acted differently and what could then have been an alternative storyline in this relation? Discuss how the client's and the social worker's different identities in the situation make such alternative storylines more or less reasonable.

- *The interaction between the parties in the actual situation*

How are both client and social worker influenced by the interaction between them?

How do they define and interpret the other?

- *The work relation and definitions of situations*

What is the social worker's definition of the situation? What is the client's definition of the situation? What is the shared definition of the situation? What sort of process have they developed to be able to make this "Social Security office conversation"? What is it in the conversation that indicates that they have such a common definition so that what they are doing could be called a "working relation" or "working agreement"? What is threatening in the situation – and may cause the danger of the communication situation collapsing.

White Niggers, translation from "Hvite niggere"– by Ingvar Ambjørnsen, Cappelen 1986 (pp 11–17)

The next day I went to the Social Security Office. I'll never be good at these kinds of things. First of all, I've never liked begging, and secondly, I am not good at handling those cynics who often populate places like that. As a result, I didn't have much experience with the Social Security Offices in Oslo. A bit strange maybe, considering that most of the people I knew in this city saw themselves as experts in the game of government money. I was surrounded by people who could talk themselves into a solid monthly wage, plus expenses. For these people, all they had to do was to take a few Benzedrines, talk those bloody people 'down', get them moving in and out of offices and meeting rooms and don't give up before the Social Security officer almost begs to send the check in the mail. It is with great reluctance I have to hand it to the most reactionary forces among the Norwegian people, that it's a damned matter of fact that if you don't have the gift of the gab you don't have much of a chance at a Norwegian Social Security Office.

Oh well, I forced myself to climb the steps into the big, white, layer cake of a building which accommodates Grunerløkka Social Security, and I didn't have a good time. I couldn't bear the thought of taking the lift; I'd had to break myself of that kind of frivolous activity many months ago. I was thinking of Charly, and of Rita, who surely would have handled this job much better than me, and of those real professionals I knew who would drop into a place like this just for the kick of it. Suddenly I got a frantic need to see Charly and Rita again. And there was something almost physical about this need. Like the need for the first cigarette in the morning or a glass of whiskey when you're really down.

I forced myself to keep going. Bucks. First the bucks. Without bucks you have only yourself to rely on, and I had a feeling that that wouldn't be enough in a still winter-cold Norway.

It is hard to imagine that I could have been more unfortunate in the choice of Social Security officer, although, who knows – a huge office like this may

have room for bigger arseholes than the one who was treading all over me. Even before I reached the counter I knew this would be tough. A huge female, close to one metre ninety, was running around in a fury behind the counter, while she alternately scolded her colleagues or stared icily at a poor devil in front of me, who was standing, cap in hand, like a real proletarian. His back was towards me, but I knew exactly what his facial expression would be like; I've seen people treated like dogs before. I have no idea what he had done wrong, – probably spent the money in an inappropriate way. When the social worker saw me, however, things became a bit easier for the poor guy, because not even this enormous bitch could manage to deep-freeze two grown men at once. Especially if she wanted to keep up the sting in her voice while she was telling the other social workers, or whatever they were, where David had bought the beer. It seemed as if she had found in me a ready- made object for hate. Her eyes, two blue lumps of ice, one on each side of her nose, reflected the light from the cold, hesitant spring day outside in a way I could feel all the way down to my balls.

(…)

A dull calmness came over me when I got to sit down. I knew I was in good company, these people were utterly indifferent to my faith and my life, and from this indifference a quiet solidarity was born. Not a solidarity that can be demonstrated by a pat on the back or a handshake, or be recognized with waving flags or banners. No, the solidarity of the social clientele treads softly; in short, it's about letting other distressed people be alone with their misery. While I was sitting there filling in the ridiculous form, I could learn a lot from watching the following events: A young man, with eyes showing unveiled paranoia, walks across the floor towards the counter. He's scared, oh God, he's so scared! My friend from 'Huk' and 'Hot House' is unfortunately out on an errand, so another female comes to help. The guy stands there, swaying nervously, while he is trying to explain as clearly as possible what he is doing in this part of the world on a Wednesday mid-morning in March. Like the rest of us who have stood in that queue before him, he is not so keen to have his case made public. Well, the bloke is standing there, mumbling and sighing, until the woman behind the counter

suddenly loses her last thread of patience and yells, so even the lunatic stops dead, looks around, suddenly interested in the real world. *"– Good Heavens, You don't really expect to come here, straight from 'Ullersmo' (name of a jail in Norway) and expect that we …"*

If I could have dug a hole in the floor for the man, I would have done so, and with the greatest of pleasure I too would have descended with him, down to new and better worlds, full of discretion and easily obtained money. But the only thing I could do there and then was to promise myself that I would never forget his forced reptilian smile when he turned around to leave, and that one day I would portray him as an everyday hero: he didn't die of shame. I resisted a nearly unbearable urge to throw this woman out of the window with glass and grey hair flying. All of us, the 'seventeenth of May- gang', the whores and dope enthusiasts, were suddenly intent on not hearing anything at all. Walls and ceilings were studied intently, one threw a glance at the propaganda material from the employment office for jobs that didn't exist – the glue sniffer suddenly began to take an interest in his worn-out rubber shoes. But as soon as the ex-prisoner with his over- stretched nerves left the room half stunned, a dozen pairs of eyes were immediately directed towards Mother Hen behind the counter, and you would have to be born a social worker to survive the collective contempt we radiated. We were too poor to revolt when we were so close to the money. We had come here to beg. Unfortunately we couldn't afford to make a revolution; at least not before we ourselves had received a clear and unmistakeable *no*. That's it! That's just what it's like to be a poor beggar: It affects one's honour and conscience. All we could give this cunt was a cold stare, and we really did as good as we could, all of us.

After a couple of hours it was my turn. I had already understood that this day wouldn't provide me with my definite breakthrough as fortune hunter, so I couldn't say that I was too surprised that it was 'the old Tartar' who came to get me. She didn't say a word, but her right index finger pointed for a moment directly at me, before it quickly took the shape of a butcher's hook. I followed somewhat reluctantly.

Her office was almost exactly as I had imagined. The obligatory children's drawings on the walls, signed and dedicated to Auntie Lone. An issue of New Time* (Ny Tid*, a weekly left wing news paper) lay open on the table, and most of the door was covered by an 8th of March feminist poster from some years back.

I must admit I gave the home of this Lone a tiny thought, because I was convinced *she* had a home. I tried to imagine where the Cabinet was placed, and who had decided that this was the place for it. In other words, who wears the pants in Auntie Lone's house.

– Now it's us, said Lone the social worker, sad and annoyed at the same time. – It's certainly not easy to decipher this handwriting of yours!

– No, I replied. – But as I am here now I can be a help with that.

– Hm. One thing I can tell you right now, she said, studying the form, – there is not much that we can do for you here.

Not here either, I thought.

– And what does it say here? She bent forward, placing her short-clipped nail on the space marked "occupation".

– Author, I said.

– Yes, that's what I thought, she said, and smiled. – That's the problem! You need to take on a job, you see.

– Firstly, I said, as calmly as possible, – as an author I can tell you that expressions such as "take on" a job went out of fashion in the Norwegian language long ago. And, secondly …

– Then you at least should bother to *turn* yourself *in* to the employment office she said irritated. – Until you get your papers sorted out down there, there isn't much we can do.

– I thought it was illegal to register oneself as unemployed when one already has a fulltime job, I said. – I'm polishing a script, but it will take a couple of weeks before I can get any advance on it. Those weeks I plan to survive and I'm here to ask the Norwegian government to make it possible!

– Some job! I'm afraid you have to potter around with your writings on Sundays, as most artists have to do. I personally know many who …

– Just give me some food assistance, I said. – I know you can't deny me that. Fuck the living allowance because I don't live, you can skip the travel expenses as well, because I don't pay, and all the other extras that I know you know about and actually should be obliged to inform me about – forget it! Save the money until a cringer shows up who is willing to lick your arse!

I stood up. – Just give me my food assistance!

– I know there's something called the Organization of Authors Solidarity Fund, she said with an effort.

– I know, I said. It was the Organization of Authors that paid my ticket from Hamburg to Oslo. Without those angels, it would have been impossible for me to come here and degrade myself today.

I walked out, and waited for the paper mill to spit out my cheque. After fifteen minutes she was back, and there was quite a nice figure on it. A far greater amount than the lousy money one is entitled to for food for two weeks.

She smiled when she gave me the cheque. – Sorry. I have had a bad day. Believe me; it's not always so easy in this line of business.

– Not in our business either, I said, nodding towards the lunatic still walking in circles, in the middle of the floor.

Interpretation of central parts of the text

• *To be Social Security client belonging to an identity generating environment*
The "I"- person in this story will here be called narrator. He socializes with

experienced users of the Social Security office and now he goes to the Social Security office himself to apply for social welfare. He strengthens his identity as Social Security client by conveying an inner perspective of being a Social Security Client. This is done by empathizing with the person being treated like a dog and the others experiencing themselves as the unworthy needy. One way to reduce the shame that the clients feel when their personal business unfolds in front of the whole waiting room, is to act like they don't hear or see anything of what is happening. "We were too poor to revolt when we were so close to the money". Here the narrator manages to show that the essential task or "third part", which is common for all of them coming to the Social Security office, is to receive financial help. Their shared identity as clients creates an enemy image of the social worker, which can be seen in the text: "One would have to be born a social worker to survive the contempt we all radiated."

• *Critical points in the preliminary phase of the conversation situation.*
The interpretation of the specific Social Security officer that the narrator will get in contact with starts when he identifies her general attitude towards the clients and sees how she treats her colleagues. Even before they have exchanged one single word he has interpreted the situation as "it seemed as if she had found a readymade object for hate in me". The client has "tuned in" to where the social worker is, while there are no signs in the text of the opposite. This is an example that there is not accordance between theory and practice in social work. Here it is the client trying to understand the social worker, while the textbook says that it is the social worker's task to try to understand the client's situation.

• *The interaction between the parties in the actual conversation.*
The questions the Social Security officer starts the conversation with is content-wise ok, but the tone of voice and the way in which she talks to the narrator makes him feel accused. He keeps to a formal style in his answers and appears matter-of-factly also when the social worker comes with accusations and characterisations of him being demanding. The narrator speaks from a sort of "everyday life" understanding of how to behave in contact with the bureaucratic system. The Social Security officer however has the starting point in this concrete institution and how she is experiencing her working days. She is overworked and it appears that she doesn't think the users should make demands of the employees in the same way as they would have done in other bureaucratic systems. What

struck the reader is the contrast between the objective form from the narrator and the rather subjective tone of the social worker. The fact that they each communicate from their own interpretation of the situation is shown through absent interaction in the situation. The conversation situation is not characterised by a dialogue, but can rather be described as two different dialogues where the participants are not on the same wavelength.

- *The work relationship and definitions of situations*

The narrator and the social worker always bring a definition of the situation with them when they talk together. In the last part of the excerpt the Social Security officer has got a name; Lone. When the narrator presents himself as an "author", Lone does not take him seriously and asks him to get to know what job he has. Through the conversation the narrator shows an insight into the laws of the Social Security and he appears more concrete as a bona fide author. Through this conversation the social worker realizes that this is a real and also famous author who has come to the Social Security office. This turns the situation for the social worker and the narrator receives more money than he actually has claim for. She appears more human and apologizes by saying she's having a bad day and that her line of business is not so easy. The narrator replies in the same style that it is not so easy in his line of business either – by that referring to being a client at the Social Security office. The text excerpt is generally influenced by client and social worker having such different definitions of the situation, so they have a very limited "working relation" or "working agreement". At the end of the excerpt it looks like they have arrived at a position which one, by Shulman's definitions of technical terms, could call a "working relation".

Critique of interactionism in social work

Humanistic values in social work to which interactionism can be related, is preoccupied with the social worker trying to understand the client and "be where the client is". One problem is that this can be seen as an ideology and not as reality. It can even lead to becoming such a strong norm among social workers that they "bias" the relationship to the client, to make it fit with the theory. The problem with interactionism can be that the social workers are not trained to be aware of differences and possible conflicts between the client and the social worker. They can be too much focused on the two person relationship instead of

being aware of the institutional connection they interact within and how this influences the situation.

This is a movement that wants to grasp what can be seen in a situation and is less interested in ethical questions. The social worker that identifies with this movement can be seen as a harmonising symbol of the society. One is, for example, not interested in moralistic questions related to who has most power in a situation or who appears more or less suppressed in the situation. Also, when one emphasizes that the parties together create the various understandings of the situation and the "negotiation arrangements", one can unfortunately avoid ethical questions about what is normatively right or wrong in a situation.

When phenomenology, as a part of interactionism, makes a starting point for practical health and social work, it is relevant to ask if this tradition focuses enough on problem solving in the form of providing recipes and prescriptions for practice. Phenomenology is first and foremost a philosophical movement. To act in everyday life, which demands continual and sometimes fast decisions, is not the strong side of philosophy. As the philosopher says in "Sofie's world":

Sophie, if there is one thing I want this course to teach you, it's not to jump to conclusions. (Gaarder 1994: 264, translated by Moeller 1995: 210)

Interactionism has been preoccupied with micro situations and how one is to understand the various worldviews people bring with them to a situation. One can be absorbed in the micro interaction in concrete conversations and loose sight of the greater patterns in the situation. In practise it can also be difficult to make the connection between the individual and society standards.

Summary

Central characteristics with interactionism in social work

- One is interested in understanding the world as it appears from the individual's point of view.

- One cannot experience anything else than what is appearing in an interpreted form

- One is interested in the various definitions of the situation that is taking place

- Thomas-theorem is central: "When a human defines a situation as real, then it is real in its' consequences."

- Focus on the moment, the present

- Language and symbolic forms are in focus

- The self is socially created and consists of both a subjective part and an objective part

- To take on the other's role is central in this movement

Action model and the relationship of social worker – client

- A model is the "reflective practitioner" who emphasises the "reflection in action"

- In symbolic interactionism within social work, the interpretation through symbols and self-reflection is emphasised, as an alternative to a too strong psychological focus of human actions.

- It is central to understand the others self opinion and to "reach a wave length" about definitions of situations and "symbolic forms"

- Schulman's interactional model stresses the fact of being emotional in the process.

- "Triads" and "Working Agreement" are central in interactionism

Value orientation

- Humans are socially created via the picture others create of them, but there is also room for innovation and creativity

- The world is an objective and subjective reality

- The right of self-determination is central

- One tries to enter the interaction "without prejudices"

- Common phenomenon and "life statements" such as trust, honesty or compassion are important.

Criticism

- It can be easy to oversee the opposites between social worker and client, and concentrate too much on the experienced practitioner being able to speak on the behalf of the clients interests

- The individual nearly becomes an "isolated island"

- Structures play too small a role in the theory

- Does not consider structural power which is difficult to "negotiate" away from

- Too harmony- and actor-oriented

Chapter 4:
Learning theories in social work

Introduction

The main focus of learning theories in social work is on behaviour. The focus is on the individual's actions and activities in their surroundings. A person is seen as being in a reciprocal influential relationship with their surroundings. The individual is influential at the same time as being influenced.

"Behavior" is defined as both behavior which can be observed easily, and mental processes such as thoughts and feelings. In this definition of behaviour, the roots go back to the behaviorists, who focused on behavior that could be seen, and to theories of more complex forms of learning that also emphasize what is behind the visible behavior.

In a learning theoretical approach, problematic behavior and malfunction is first and foremost seen as a result of learning. Action is directed towards a change in the conditions for learning as well as the learning of new behavior and recognition of experiences. The main question is: Which behavior, of the client or others involved, ought to be changed? How can this behavior be understood? Which changes are desirable and what needs to be done to reach such a change in behavior? There is also a focus on the conditions in society which have to be changed in order to improve the learning conditions, as well as maintaining desirable behavior. In this approach, behavior is seen as a result of the interplay between the individual and their surroundings, and it is therefore important to understand what factors are contributing to forming and maintaining behavior.

In learning theories, the relationship between the social worker and the client is heavily influenced by problem solving. Together, the client and the social worker will indentify the problems, analyze the situation they appear in, discuss goals for the collaboration and make agreements on how to reach the goals. The client has concrete tasks for achieving the goals. The goals are limited and clearly formulated. It is therefore relatively easy for both parts to evaluate if the goals have been reached.

Learning theories were first included in case-work in the 1960s. Hanson (1983: 142–143) says that even though behavioral therapies started to be used in milieu therapy in the 1950s, learning theories were not accepted in social work before the 1960s, when social work was criticized because psychodynamic theory dominated the field. Part of the criticism was that the goals and the outcomes were difficult to measure. In addition, the focus was so retrospective that the client's situation here and now was hardly given any attention at all. Therefore, goal oriented and problem-solving methods with an emphasis on the here and now were being developed. These methods used learning theories.

Helen Perlman is seen as a leading person for introducing one of these theories into social work. The model she presented can be defined as "social work as problem-solving". Perlman has written a considerable number of books, which have had a great influence in Norway. The first book, Social Casework – a Problem-Solving Process, which laid the foundation, came in 1957. She used a psycho dynamic approach, which was the acceptable approach within casework at this time. Her approach, however, differed from the more diagnostically influenced social work because she emphasised that the social worker ought to have a clear starting point in the current situation, emphasise the client's understanding of the problem and be focused on problem solving with clearly defined outcomes. She places less emphasis on irrational feelings and defence mechanisms (Perlman 1957). Her work, and the ways in which casework developed, is seen by many as opening the gate to learning theories (Howe 1987, Barber 1991). Dewey, who belongs to the Chicago-school and was Addams colleague, is put forward as an inspiration. He is known for his reform pedagogy "learning by doing", which was tested in the Addams Hull House-settlement in Chicago. Deegan (1988) stresses the friendship and the similarities between Dewey, Addams and Mead. The similarity is first and foremost their view on the human being as formed by social interaction. So, we can see how the links from Perlman can be drawn back to the Chicago-school's influence and Addams, the pioneer.

Thomas (1970) states that throughout the 1960s it became more and more difficult to resist learning theories, because much of the work was now focused on changing behavior. Thomas links learning theory and the methods developed for behavioral change directly to social work. This link was less influential, but

contributed to Perlman's tradition, taking into account learning theories' understanding of how behavior can be learnt and changed. The techniques developed for behavior modification were adopted into social work, the institutional framework within which the work was performed and the field which already had its tradition and professional ethics.

As already mentioned, Perlman and her work was known and in use in Norway, and she contributed to the area of individual social work becoming more focused on outcomes and objectives. The client and social worker should together express and solve the problems. Perlman was an important forerunner for 'task centred casework" which Laura Epstein and William Reid developed in the 1970s and wrote several textbooks about. Epstein and Reid's (1972) "task centred casework" is in Norwegian translated into "oppgaveorientert sosialt arbeid" or abbreviated as OOT. This, and other short-time methods with similar origin and methodology, have coloured social work in Norway heavily. Even though these approaches refer to various theoretical foundations, we have found that to a large degree they can be linked to learning theories. This is due to the development of the methodology as well as the focus on changing the defined learning objectives and the understanding of connections as well as the context.

In regard to behavior therapy (or behavior modification which we will here use synonymously) in milieu therapy and in the treatment of psychological dysfunctions, social workers have been little active in the use of these methods. Some have however, through practice and post graduate studies, become more familiar and knowledgeable about behavior therapy and have started to use the methods. The techniques related to behavior therapy are presented within the bachelor degree curriculum, but are rather limited. Students within the Child Welfare profession seem to be somewhat more familiar with this approach within their studies.

For Social Educators on the other hand, the situation has been completely different. Behavior therapy is practiced in milieu therapy and residential work and has a central role in this work. Therapies founded on psychodynamic theory are to a great extent reliant upon verbal communication. So, for people who have difficulties in communicating, this type of therapy is not well suited. Behavior therapy, with its focus on behavior, is therefore much more accessible. These

methods can also be used with people who do not have verbal language as a main source of communication.

Due to the fact that many people with disabilities previously lived fulltime in institutions, much of the milieu therapy and residential work was practiced within this framework. Now the work is performed in arenas other than institutions, milieu therapy has thereby changed as well. This has led to more social workers operating as milieu therapists and, through their practices, are now more familiar with milieu therapy methods based on learning theories.

We will argue that in social work, learning theories have been implemented in the traditional methods, especially individual social work and social group work and therapy. Learning theories have influenced the understanding of problems and behavior. The individual's or a group's adjustment difficulties are seen as a result of inappropriate learning. Reinforcing conditions in the surrounding environment maintains the behavior which causes problems. To change the behavior, the focus is placed on both the individual and their surroundings. Clearly expressed objectives and outcomes for change and problem solving are characteristics for this tradition within social work.

Origins and development

In this tradition, there are two central terms; "behavior" and "learning". In the introduction we defined 'behavior" as behavior which can be observed as well as thoughts and feelings.

When talking about "learning", it is common to think about the activity within educational institutions. But the learning we talk about here also includes how we learn to behave, to interact with other people and to think and feel. "Learning" can be defined as a relatively lasting change in behavior that had its origin in practice. Change of behavior related to biological development or temporary changes due to tiredness or drugs are not included in this definition (Atkinson et al. 1993: 253).

We make a division between theories based on an associative approach such as behaviorism, and those which have a cognitive approach. To have an associative approach is to have a focus on the relationship between stimulus and response in

learning, while a cognitive approach focuses on how expectations, cognitive maps, insight and observation all influence the learning process.

The theories described below under the heading Behaviorism, can all be related to associative learning, while the heading Cognitive Theories will present approaches with a focus on cognitive conditions, the importance of motivation for learning and social learning.

Behaviorism

Stimulus – response approach

John Watson (1878–1958), an American psychologist, is seen as the father of Behaviorism. He was influenced by scientific thinking. He was of the opinion that it was impossible to experiment with and research the inside of the mind without so many subjective interpretations that it could no longer be called scientific. He chose to define psychology as "the science of human behavior" and was not interested in thoughts and feelings which could not be observed, such as personality structure and unconscious processes. Watson experimented with the connection between stimuli (S) and response (R). He used rats in many of his studies and argued that this was more of an advantage to the researcher than studying human beings, because it was easier for the researcher to be objective. In 1913 he published the article: Psychology as the Behaviorist Views it", which is seen to have had a great impact on the further development of psychology.

Watson was heavily influenced by the Russian physicist, Pavlov, who researched the importance of digestion and the nervous system. Pavlov's starting point was that all organisms, including the human organisms, have an innate conditioned reflex action which consists of certain influences or stimuli releasing certain reactions or behavior. The organism's ability for such signal functions takes place via the nervous system. Pavlov researched dogs' reactions to food. He found that salivation (R) is not only triggered by food (S). It is possible to create the same reactions by connecting other effects with the feeding, as for example ringing a bell. He called the learnt responses conditional response, while the reactions which came naturally when bringing the food were called unconditioned. That is, the unconditioned responses are linked to biological processes, while the conditioned responses are learnt (Pavlov 1928).

Pavlov also found that counter-conditioning is possible. "Discrimination" is a central learning theory principle and was first introduced by Pavlov. By discrimination one learns to react differently. By reinforcement and punishment the human organism learns to react to increasingly smaller degrees of differences. Pavlov's work also shows the clear foundation of learning theories in a biological perspective. Classical conditioning, or Pavlovian conditioning, is seen as the simplest form of associative learning. An association between two situations are established.

Watson was inspired by Pavlov. He explains human behavior and habits with a complex learning process based on stimulus – response theory (Watson 1924) Watson said himself that the human being is a product of learning. A person is almost completely controlled by external factors and stimuli. Watson does not express any specific view on society, and he strives to be an objective, neutral mediator of exact science. His only concern is what can be observed. He has a firm belief that science can solve all problems. He states as follow:

I am trying to dangle a stimulus in front of you, a verbal stimulus which, if acted upon, will gradually change this universe. For the universe will change if you bring up your children, not in the freedom of the libertine, but in behavioristic freedom – a freedom which we cannot even picture in words, so little do we know of it. Will not these children in turn, with their better ways of living and thinking, replace us as society and in turn bring up their children in a still more scientific way, until the world finally becomes a place fit for human habitation? (Watson 1924, in 1966: 303–304)

Operant conditioning

Skinner (1904–1990) is central to the development of behaviorism. He was interested in the consequences of behavior and how the consequences affect the behavior. He presupposes that all individuals actively try to influence their surroundings (operate on the surroundings – thereby the term operant conditioning) in a way so as to make it better for the individual him/herself. Skinner focuses on the connection between the context where the behavior takes place and the affect this behavior has on the surroundings (Skinner 1953).

To be able to modify the behavior, the context in which the behavior occurs needs to be analyzed. Both the events ahead of the behavior and the ones after the behavior need to be taken into account. Skinner calls consequences that lead to an increased possibility of the behavior to be repeated in similar situations for 'reinforces'. The consequences that lead to a reduced possibility of a behavior are called 'punishers'.

Skinner was interested in which laws are important for learning. The behaviorists have formulated two "laws" for reinforces of behavior:

1. Give praise or other social or material reinforcers

Reinforcers can be physical things, praise or other features the individual appreciates. This is well known within child rearing. "You're so good" or "because you were so good at tidying up your room, you can go and watch the movie you wanted to" etc. This is called positive reinforcement.

2. Remove something that a person has experienced as negative

Here, reactions which hinder the behavior are removed. One example is the removal of grades for pupils who receive low grades. For these pupils the evaluation can be experienced as distressing and cause the pupil to make little effort in school activities. The grades are removed and the pupil is instead praised when he or she does good work. This can increase the desired behavior: more effort into school work. This strategy, to remove something that has been experienced as negative and a hindrance for wanted behavior, is called negative reinforcement.

If one wants to reduce behavior there are two other principles or 'laws' described:

1. Remove something that has been experienced as positive

As an example we can use the child who finds it difficult to calm down and fall asleep at bedtime. The child is screaming and the parents run back and forth to calm it down. They want to reduce the child's restless behavior. Here it may be that parents coming when the child screams has been experienced as a reinforcement because the child wanted contact with the parents. If the parents

stay away when the child screams, the child will gradually learn that this is not the way to behave to gain the parents' attention. It could easily be argued though that the child's needs to be in contact with the parents are not met. So, in practice it is often about doing two things at the same time; give the child more attention before bedtime as well as staying away after the child has been taken to bed.

2. Introduce something that is experienced as negative

Introducing something that is experienced as negative includes adding consequences of a behaviour that is experienced as negative by the individual. This is usually described as punishment. When a child is not back on time as agreed on, it will get 'grounded'. It is here presumed that the child views being out as something positive. Hindering the child in going out, linked to the broken agreements, is assumed to reduce such behavior.

Skinner is of the opinion that development depends partly on innate differences, especially how quickly an individual learns (susceptibility to reinforcements) and partly the learning process itself (which depends on the circumstances of the surroundings). Development of behavior, also problematic behavior, is in this way seen in relation to learning. Operant conditioning can explain causal relationships. Skinner did not view development and growth as linked to set stages of development. The detrimental factor was the conditions for development and the conditions for reinforcement. Skinner did not refute the idea of inner processes, or developmental stages, but the fact that they could not be approached by scientific claims of objectivity and measurability, makes it impossible to reject or prove their influences (Skinner 1988).

Skinner states that the individual learns that a consequence follows a certain behavior. The consequence can be uncomfortable or the individual can experience it as positive. In both cases the point is that the individual learns to connect the reason and the effect by their regularly repeated occurrences.

Cognitive learning theories

Cognitive learning theories differ from behavior theories in at least two ways (Svartdal & Flaten 1998: 222). Firstly, the psychological mechanisms involved in learning are seen as primary in relation to observable behavior and change of

behavior. Secondly, the cognitive mechanisms are given an independent causal role in explaining behavior and the change of behavior. In other words, thoughts are seen as having an influence on behavior, and by changing the way of thinking one can also change behavior. In this way the focus is on thought structures (cognitive structures) to change behavior. One assumes that learning occurs via establishing knowledge such as "what is where" (cognitive maps) or "what leads to what" (expectations) (ibid: 225).

It is now widely accepted that cognitive mechanisms have importance for learning.

Cognitive maps

An early cognitive learning theorist is Tolman (1886–1961). He is of the opinion that learning takes place by the individual creating "cognitive maps", that is, a visual representation of information. He also uses animals in his experiments and claims that the critical factor behind the conditioning is what the animal knows. He filled labyrinths that the rats had walked in beforehand with water. It showed that they swam in the corridors they previously had learnt to walk in. Tolman argued that they did this because they had created a form of understanding, orienting maps, which are not linked to motor patterns (Tolman 1958).

Problem solving processes and learning

Koehler (1925) also responds to the mechanical thinking in operant conditioning. He works with both humans and animals. In experiments with chimpanzees he places food out of reach to find that they start using tools to obtain it. First, the chimpanzees spend time to get to know the tools. Then, the animals withdraw for a while which Koehler interprets as the chimpanzees picturing the situation and probably combining it with their new experiences with the tools. Finally they use the tools and problem solving has taken place. This involves both a problem-solving process and that the new knowledge is remembered and used in similar situations later.

Learned helplessness

Seligman and Maier (1967) performed experiments with dogs which showed how helplessness is learnt. They showed how the animals became paralyzed and filled with apathy because they repeatedly had experienced uncomfortable electric

chocks which they could not escape. When they later had the possibility to escape, they did not make any attempts to do so. Seligman (1975) interpreted these observations as that the dogs had established an expectation of their behavior to have little effect on the surroundings. This expectation later hindered a constructive behavior when it was possible to escape. This understanding of how helplessness can be learned was then developed further as a theory in understanding depressions in human beings. The existing perception is that helplessness and apathy is a central contribution in depressions. Seligman presented a new view when he claimed that helplessness is a reason for depression. This original theory of learned helplessness has been further developed and used to understand and treat depressions. The theory has also been used to understand why prisoners in German concentrations camps did not revolt. It has also been used to explain why women who have been abused in a relationship do not leave (Atkinson et al. 1993).

Model-learning

Social learning theories emphasis that learning cannot be limited to an individual's experience with their surroundings. Often, learning takes place by observing other's behavior and the situation it occurs in. To learn by observing other's behaviour and see if rewards are given or not, is described as modeling and is formulated by Bandura. In a trial with three groups of four-year olds, they were shown a short movie with an adult behaving aggressively towards a doll. Then one of the groups saw the adult be rewarded for the aggression, another group saw the adult being punished and the last group saw that the behavior did not lead to any consequences. Thereafter, all the children got to play with the dolls by themselves as they were being observed. Finally they were rewarded if imitating the aggressive model. Bandura found that the ones that were shown the movie where the adult was punished for his/her behavior showed less degree of aggression when playing, than the two other groups. He also found that the children in all the groups showed the same degree of aggression in their playing when they, in the third stage of the experiment, were rewarded for imitating the model's behavior. He interprets this as all the children learned something from the aggressive model in the first phase, but that in phase 2 they show that they are influenced by the consequences received by the model's behavior (Bandura 1969).

Bandura's theory about learning by observation is influenced by cognitive theory. In this understanding of learning, thoughts have a much more prominent role. The cognitive perspective in social learning theory emphasis that the most important factor in learning and intelligence lies in the organisms ability to mentally recall pictures of the world and to act (operate) on these. Pictures where behavior and consequence are linked are recalled mentally. In this understanding of learning it is recognized that it is not only about transferring previous learning of connections, but also that there are complex connections between previous experiences when new maps are to be drawn (Atkinson et al 1993).

Behavior modification

Alternatives to psychodynamic therapy

It wasn't until the 1950s that learning theory research transformed into approachable models for treatment and therapy, and not until the 1960s did behaviour therapy become a competitor to existing psychodynamic oriented therapies (Thomas 1970: 185–186).

Since Freud there have been many forms of psychotherapies based on his theories. Behaviour modification consists of a various range of methods. The origin of behavior modification can be tied to the learning-theoretical principals as described above. All misbehavior is seen as learnt, and it is possible to unlearn or relearn behavior so as to achieve a more appropriate behaviour. While psychodynamic therapies are concerned with the unconscious, behavior modification is focused on understanding how problematic behavior is learnt and how the surrounding conditions can be adapted to modify the behavior.

Another difference between psychodynamic therapies and behavior therapy is that the former has outcomes that are difficult to assess, while behavior therapy usually has more limited outcomes such as modification of problematic behavior only in defined situations. Another characteristic of behavior therapy is that the performers often are more interested in assessing the results. This is also easier to do because the goals are more defined and linked to behavior. Change of behavior is the goal.

Behavior modification is developed in relation to the learning of skills and modification of inappropriate behavior, and in the treatment of psychological

illnesses. It has been recognized as the most useful and useable approach in milieu therapy and residential work. To understand its dominance in milieu therapy, the answer also lies in the visibility of the methodology and rather simple approachability for people from different professional backgrounds and people without any formal professional competency. The therapy emphases clear, defined goals that can be evaluated easily, which can be encouraging in the work. Also for the clients it can be motivational to concentrate on clear attainable goals.

Psycho dynamic therapies based on insight gained through verbal language, is unattainable for many clients who have difficulties with communication. Many people with disabilities and serious psychological illnesses have difficulties with communication, and here behavior modification is something completely different and available for use.

Below we will describe some of the methods used in behavior modification. The review will necessarily be somewhat sketchy, but should provide some examples of therapeutic use.

Aversion therapy

Aversion therapy for drug addicts is one example with origins in behaviorism. By the use of Apomorfin (an Antabus) which is placed under the skin, the client experiences great physical discomfort if alcohol is consumed. By this connection of stimulus and response, the goal is that the client after a while will feel aversion and discomfort when confronted with alcohol.

Also, methods including electronic shock have been used in treatment of law offenders, for example people sentenced for sexual assaults. By watching films to become sexually aroused, and then providing an electric shock, one tries to learn aversion to a similar situation.

Treatment of phobias

The thought behind the procedures is that anxiety is learnt and connected to certain events. One method starts with the client learning physical relaxation, and thereafter mentally bringing forward pictures from the anxiety provoking situation. The method is called 'desensitising' and takes place in stages. The client first learns how deep relaxation can take place. Here, various methods can be

used. The next step is to mentally recall the situations that create the anxiety. Here, the client is to move from the situations with least anxiety to the situations which create the strongest fear. Rather than confronting the fearful situations only mentally, they can also be visited in reality (Atkinson et al. 1993).

There are divided opinions about how one is to understand the consequences described in the method above. Some argue that the main point for change is not to link the relaxed muscles with the situation causing anxiety. They emphasize that the change happens when the person experiences that the situation is not leading to catastrophes. This understanding also has a method linked to it, called "flooding' (ibid). It involves the person pressuring him/herself to confront the anxiety-filled situation, and staying in it for a while without the possibility of escaping. For example, for a person suffering from claustrophobia one training situation can be to lock oneself in a little room for some hours. By experiencing that no catastrophes happen, the fear of similar situations will weaken.

Behavior analyses – outcomes – measures

Methods where reinforcement is used systematically, both to modify unwanted behavior and to learn new behavior, can be traced back to operant learning. When measures are to be taken, a thorough behavioral analysis is necessary to understand the context in which the behavior occurs. This analysis is the foundation for the assessment of which measures are to be taken to achieve the outcomes. For the last two decades there has been a critical view towards outcomes and goal setting in behavior therapy. One criticism has been that the focus on proving measurable results has been superior to how relevant the behavior change has been for the client. This criticism has caused greater focus on the choice of outcomes.

In child upbringing it is a well known method not to give attention when the child is behaving in an undesirable way. Attention itself may have worked as a positive reinforcement of non-desirable behavior even though the attention was irritation at the unwanted behavior. This depends on the needs of the child. If the child wants more attention, but experiences difficulties in obtaining this in other ways then behaving inappropriately, they learn that this is the way to get attention. The parent's angry comments increase the behavior instead of reducing it. To eliminate the unwanted behavior, the link between the problematic behavior, and

that which the child experiences as positive, has to be broken. A combination can be used by not giving attention to the unwanted behavior, but rather do so in situation s where the child is showing wanted behavior.

Another method of eliminating behavior is the use of punishment. However, punishment used in a therapeutic context raises both ethical and judicial concerns. The main idea, both in child rearing and in behavior therapy, has been to strengthen reinforcement of wanted behavior and diminish punishment of unwanted behavior.

In order to increase wanted behavior many methods have been used. One method is to give awards in the form of an object or a symbol which later on can be exchanged into something the individual values. This is called "token economy".

To achieve a wanted behavior this can be done by breaking up the behavior into parts, and then strengthen the parts in stages. This is called "shaping' of behavior. Shaping presupposes an analysis of behavior as divided into smaller units which then can be reinforced. Such circumstances demand a systematic arrangement of a behavior sequence and reinforcements attached to the implementation.

"Time-out" is used by many and is about removing a person if he or she performs unwanted behavior in a situation they want to be in. This is also used in child rearing.

Other methods of treatment based on cognitive learning theory

From the 1970s, treatment methods based on cognitive learning theories started to be used. In this tradition it is presupposed that the individual's learning is, to a great extent, based on how stimuli is perceived and interpreted. Even though these techniques have their foundations in basic learning theoretical principles, it is argued that a person uses various mechanisms for learning, that is, a person uses mental processes actively *and* has the ability to make evaluations and judgements mentally. Various therapies have this foundation and use different methods in their treatment. One method is to role-play situations which the client finds difficult, or where unwanted behaviour occurs. In this therapy the client is supported to find and try out more acceptable reactions in special situations.

Bandura formulated a theory about "self-efficacy" (Bandura 1977). He argued that behaviour therapy should increase people's belief in them self and their mastering of different situations and events. Treatment methods are perceived as effective only to the degree by which they change a person's belief in how they can master their own problems. This experience of mastering and the belief in a positive outcome, Bandura argues, are crucial for how a person faces difficulties in life. This can be trained by modeling or that a person him/herself performs and masters situations themselves, thereby building up and strengthening their own expectations of a positive outcome.

A range of various methods have developed based on a stronger emphasis on cognition. Some are based on the client learning self regulation. This includes the client observing their own behavior and themselves finding reinforcements to either strengthen or eliminate the behavior. The client rewards and punishes their own behavior based on well thought-through sanctions. The clients are given tasks, and one could say that the client is performing self therapy while under guidance of a therapist. Diet programs, for example, are often based on such methods. A thorough insight into the client's own behavior that is leading to overweight is provided by raising the awareness of calorie intake and the situations of food intake. The client learns detailed methods of mapping the calorie intake, and then clear goals are set for how many calories each food intake should consist of. Rewards are incorporated for goals that are in accordance with the set goals.

Such methods can also be used to think differently about a problematic situation or to receive help to 'see' problems in a different light. Group therapies can also be used here. The group is used both to find different approaches and also to provide a framework for where to explore new behavior, as well as a control to avoid unwanted behavior.

Meichenbaums (1985) has worked with stress and the prevention of stress, by linking relaxation techniques and self instruction in a 'step by step' approach towards stressful situations. Beck (1990) has developed methods in work with people who have depressions. The goal is to find new methods to perceive a situation. It can also be about setting more realistic goals and desires. The cognitive part of the person is activated. Simultaneously the client is encouraged

to think through different solutions and methods of viewing their own goals and wishes, and to evaluate the consequences. Often, the clients in these therapies are given specific tasks related to specific emotions in specific situations.

The area of Social Work Practice

Problem-solving models in social work prior to the influence of learning theories

The criticism that social work was exposed to in the 1970s, contributed to both conflict and learning theories being included into social work practice. The demand for more efficiency and opportunity of evaluating the set outcomes, contributed to an opening of the doors for learning theories. In many ways, this tradition was also more suitable within the institutional framework of social work, such as short-term methodology and a focus on problem solving in here and now situations. Thomas is often seen as the bridge-builder of social work (Barber 1991, Payne 1991). Before him, Perlman had laid the foundations in the 1950s. In the transformation that has taken place it is Perlman's problem-solving model that has been developed, and then learning theories linked to this. We will start by taking a closer look at her problem-solving model below.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Helen Perlman is seen as the midwife to a tradition that views social work as problem solving. She defines casework as follows (1957: 4):

Social case work is a process used by certain human welfare agencies to help individuals to cope more effectively with their problems in social function.

Perlman focuses on helping the individual to deal more effectively with problems related to social functioning. The social worker should aim at improving the self healing powers in the client and not take over the control. She describes the core of casework as such:

A person with a problem comes to a place where a professional representative helps him by a given process (ibid.).

The model is also known for implementing the four Ps: person, problem, place and process. She says that these characteristics of casework are so general that

they can be relevant for any welfare institution. What makes them special for social work practice is the characteristic of the problems of the person, what the problem is, the institution's (place) tasks and the process in the problem solving; what is happening between the client and the social worker. Below, we will look at the meaning she gives the four Ps.

The person

What is characteristic for social work is that the person needs help with certain social and emotional parts of life.

The problem

Perlman views life as a long problem-solving process where problem solving for most of the time does not involve difficulties for the individual. When people have problems they cannot deal with, their social functioning becomes poor. According to Perlman the reasons for this can be found in one of the following areas, or a combination of these:

1. Limited motivation to work with the problems in a goal oriented manner

2. Limited abilities in dealing with the problems

3. Limited possibilities in doing something about the problem

The problems will be created by shortcomings in the relationship between the client and other people, groups or situations.

The place or the institution

The institutions in which the social workers work have as their aim to work with problems related to mastering one's own life. The aim is to help individuals with social handicaps so that the individual and/or the family can function better. The outcomes are effectuated by the social worker and his or her way of acting.

The process

Perlman describes the process as a series of problem-solving operations within a meaningful relation. She is focused on how the social worker can contribute to a

relationship which lays the ground for problem solving. The goal is that the client themselves can be more capable of dealing with the problems (ibid.).

It should be noted that Perlman herself did not declare a connection to learning theories in the 1950s. Her starting point is in ego psychology and she sees the client as an active agent who can change their situations. Her books are very methodical, but her focus is not on psychodynamic theories, although she declares her origin in this area. She emphasizes that there is always a person who is to receive help in relation to what causes stress or difficulties for him or her, whether the problems are psychological issues or the surroundings. The relationship becomes important as to whether problem solving can take place as desired.

Task-oriented short-term models influenced by learning theories

With her methodology, Perlman introduced a tradition in casework that received a lot of support. This tradition opened the way for the connection with learning theories in the 1960s (Barber 1991, Howe 1987). Below, Thomas points out the advantages of the link between behavior modification and casework (Thomas 1970: 183):

The emerging knowledge and practice of behavior modification are relevant to casework simply because caseworkers are also intimately involved in the business of modifying behavior. Much of what most caseworkers do as treatment or intervention is intended to change or stabilize some aspect of the behaviour of clients or of others involved in the social worker's professional activity.

Thomas stresses that in all social work there is a goal, at least a subsidiary goal, to change the behaviour of the client or other persons involved. He is also focused on the ability of evaluating the methods to see if the goals for the work have been reached. This was also a reason for linking learning theory to casework, which gained support. One of the criticisms of psychodynamic-oriented casework was that it was too retrospective and that it focused too little on "here and now". Because the goal in social work practice is often about personality change, it is also difficult to evaluate or measure if the working method is helpful for the clients. By using methods based on behavior therapy in social work, it will be easier to set objectives and outcomes for the work, make plans for how to reach

them and evaluate if the objectives have been reached. Thomas saw problematic behavior as learnt behavior, which is therefore possible to change via strategies based on learning theory principles.

Many of the methods in social work that are linked to learning theory focus on providing the client with possibilities to learn social skills. Many use social skills training, where the client is given tasks and then has to try out new ways of behavior in situations that cause problems for him or her. Role plays are often used, or the client seeks out real situations. An important task for the social worker is to contribute to identifying and describing the problems, which goals should be set for change and to make clear agreements on how the goals are to be achieved. To discuss various strategies and to see the consequences are a part of these models (Barber 1991).

In casework based on learning theories, unwanted behavior is seen as something learnt from a persons' previous experiences. The thought processes are also emphasized in this learning process – how experiences are perceived, and that a person's thoughts are influencing the experience.

Goldstein (1981) summarizes the approach as follows:

- The human being is best understood as seeking and moving towards their own goals.

- A person constructs his or hers own version of reality via previous learning.

- Security is achieved via adaptation, a process where one learns how to handle the surroundings.

- Adaptation is influenced by our self concept which again influences what we see.

Epstein and Reid (1972) introduced the term "task-centred casework", in Norwegian translated to "oppgaveorientert sosialt arbeid". In their early work the authors made links to Perlman and social work as problem solving. They focused on developing the problem-solving model to make it more explicit and task-

centered. The authors have written several books on task-centered casework. Epstein states the following about the theoretical connection (Epstein 1992: 20):

PRBS (problem-solving) tends to develop its theories from cognitive psychology and from behavioral theory, and also contains ideas from psychodynamic theories, especially ego psychology.

This proves again that it is rare to find action models in social work which have their foundation based on only one theory. We link task-centered social work to learning theory because we find it to be heavily influenced by this theoretical foundation. However, in the meeting with social work practice, the theories has been changed and adapted, and it would not be correct to call it a model of behavior modification, for example.

Epstein (ibid.) says that action linked to his problem-solving model is focused on specific goals and outcomes, and a structured outline for the tasks/work. The role of the social worker is active and direct, – like a counsellor, teacher or instructor. Espdal has illustrated the differences between a psychodynamic approach and her problem solving approach as follows (Epstein 1992: 92):

Psychodynamic models	Problem-solving model
1 Individual evaluation of the person, problem and the psycho-social situation	1 General orientation towards problem context
2 Diagnoses with roots in psycho pathology	2 Problem definition and boundaries
3 The treatment process: In major and serious conflicts, both intra psychic and in relation to others: Emphasis on bringing to light and 'reliving' the experience Work through things. Explore and analyse. Interpret defence, resistance, transference and gain insight. This is supplemented with managing the surroundings.	3 The treatment process: Important problems are chosen together, with goals at a level where they are likely to be reached. A prepared package of problem-solving strategies, based on pedagogical skills. Discussion of alternatives and difficulties, evaluating progressions and problems. Provide advice, revaluations, manage the surroundings and contribute with resources.
4 Goal/s: relatively flexible	4 Goal/s: strictly goal oriented

Also in Norway there has been a great amount of work with short-term methods based on Reid and Epstein (Nordstrand 1992, Eriksen and Nordstrand 1995), Eriksen 1998, 2003). What is seen as important in a task-centered approach is the emphasise of a work form which is:

- Time-limited

- Structured

- Goal-oriented

Time limited

It is suggested that the working period is limited to three months. There are two reasons for this (Epstein 1992). Firstly, it is argued that when the time is seen as a limited resource it mobilises energy in the client. Secondly, the reasoning is also to ensure that the client and the social worker do not get dependant.

Structured approach

The work is systematic, and the working process is divided into five phases (Eriksen 1998):

1. The preparation.
The work approach is set in the context, and it is explained that task-centered casework is common practice.

2. Mapping of problems and resources
Both problems and resources are to be identified. General problems have to be made specific so that it is possible to make tasks related to them. The client is to become aware of their own resources as well as resources in the social surroundings. The resources can be of the material kind or social skills. What has the client done that has worked well? Is there someone he or she knows that can assist them? Resources are seen as building blocks for the client to believe that problems can be reduced or solved. They are also seen as support to reach the goals that are set. The goals are the signposts for the work between the social worker and the client. The goals should be limited and realistic, and they are later to be evaluated.

3. Agreement of the collaboration between the social worker and the client

The agreement is to be a tool for the social worker and the client, and should consist of up to three problems. For each problem the available resources should be clarified. The agreement should also consist of up to three goals linked to the sub goals/targets and the resources. Further, it should contain agreements about which tasks the social worker and the client should do and the time frame for the collaboration. It should also be clear who the involved parties are.

4. Planning, implementation and evaluation of tasks

In this phase the focus is on the set tasks. The tasks can be real actions or mental effort. The tasks can be set to be done in between the conversations or within the meetings. The tasks are performed until the goals are reached or the problems reduced so that the client chooses to conclude.

5. Evaluation and conclusion

The conclusion should be agreed upon and included in the agreement between the client and the social worker. In the last conversation the goals and the collaboration are evaluated. If there still are some unresolved tasks or work remaining, it is useful to make a plan for how the client is to do this work without the social worker.

How long each phase lasts will vary. No phase is to be omitted, but often it will be necessary to go back to previous phases.

Goal-oriented

By the use of dialogue the client's problems are transcribed into targets and goals. The client has to recognise the problem and express clearly that he or she wants to work on this problem. Both the client and the social worker perform tasks to reach the goals (Eriksen 2003).

Eriksen (2003) points out that the theoretical foundation is eclectic. We have placed it here in this chapter based on its emphasis on the here and now situation, the aim of being goal oriented and time limited, giving clients tasks in problem solving and working towards clear goals. In our opinion, this is a methodology developed from a tradition within learning theories. The method seems to gain more and more popularity within social work practice in Norway.

Eriksen (1998) says that the method can be used with various target groups such as children, youth, families or elders, and with problem areas such as intervention, crime, unemployment, use of drugs, relationship issues, illness, absenteeism or bullying. Eriksen also argues that task-centered casework can be used with groups and within organizations. For example, task-centered casework can be used with a department service as the client. The approach will then be at a group or organisation level.

The methodology is characterized by a short time frame and clearly expressed outcomes for the collaboration. The main questions is: Which behavior, thoughts and emotions in the client, or other involved, needs to be changed, and in which ways are they to be changed? Much of the appeal in social work based on learning theory is that the work is measurable and short term oriented, and a methodology which is relatively easily accessible.

Social work with groups, treatment programs directed towards families and solution focused approaches

Work with groups

Also in groupwork are methods influenced by learning theories easier to evaluate due to the accessibility. People with the same kind of problems, (for example alcohol and drug abuse, youth with behavioral problems, prisoners serving time because of the same breach of law etc.), set goals, discuss and agree about strategies to reach the goals. The strategies can be to look at others' 'successful' way of handling situations (model-learning) and to do role play to try out alternative actions to the behavior that has caused problems and to receive feedback in a way that reinforces wanted behavior.

Also for the purpose of learning social skills, groupwork has proven to be useful. It is often used in combination with tasks which the individuals have to do in between group meetings, to then report back to the group. In setting up self-helping groups, learning theories are often part of the foundation. Learning by doing, increased competency and mastering are all central terms in learning theory. Such groups consist of people who have experienced similar challenges, and the goal is to help and support each other. In self-helping groups the function

of the social worker can, for example, be to take the initiative to the group, supervise the group leader and meet when the group asks for it.

Because a learning theoretical approach focuses on contextual factors influencing individual behavior, work in groups is seen as useful. In groups, situations creating difficulties can be acted out in role play with feedback from the group members. Likewise, situations that are mastered can be tested out and used for learning and transference into other situations. Practical tasks can be tried together with others and feed back is given.

Social work practice includes working with natural groups. It can be working with a school class or a group of children in order to change bullying or other problematic behaviour. It can also be teaching parents other ways to deal with children to achieve behavioural change.

Work with families

Various treatment programs directed towards the family have developed and gained entry into social work practice in Norway. Many of these programs offer education to learn how to use the methods. Only when the training is completed may these methods be implemented. One method which more and more social workers use is PMT (Parent Management Training). It comes from Oregon, USA and was developed by Patterson and Forgatch. They call the theory social-interaction learning theory in order to understand how aggression between family members can develop and be sustained (Ogden 1999). PMT has as its main aim to break a deadlocked and negative interaction between parents and children (4–12 years old) with behavior difficulties. The view is that the interaction between parents and children can lead the child to develop an unwanted behavior. The starting point is the daily problems and conflicts. Through role-play the parents are trained in how to respond to the children in order to achieve the best possible effect. Training in social learning principles and child raising strategies are given. Encouragement and praise is as important as setting clear goals which will be followed up consequently. The advice is to use moderate negative consequences, such as time-out and loss of privileges, rather than serious methods of punishment. Evaluation is ongoing. The parents keep an ongoing record of the communication to the child and if it is effective and if the child is cooperating. The

training program in Norway started in 2001 organized as The Behavior Project (www.atferd.uio.no). Specialists educate newly certified PMT-therapists.

In the area of working with youth (12–18 years old) with serious behavioral problems another method is also used: MST – Multi Systemic Therapy. This method was developed by Henggeler and his colleagues in California. Cognitive behavior modification and social learning theory is combined with ecological systems theory and strategic and structural family therapy. The latter two have been placed under systems theory, so it can be said that MST has its foundation both in learning and system theories (Henggeler et al 2000).

Empowerment of the family is at the core of MST. The strength of the family is focused in the work, the goal is to increase the family's capacity for problem-solving, and that the parent themselves are the ones formulating the goals of the therapy. Emphasis is placed on restructuring the youth's social network, by minimising contact with deviant friends and increasing contact with others. There is also emphasis on increasing participation in "positive" hobbies and leisure activities and to improve educational competency or work skills. The starting point is in real situations, and strategies for how to improve responsible behavior in the youth and the parents are formulated, and the evaluation is continuous. The work is organized in teams which visit the family when necessary. Also here, one has to go through the training to be a certificated MST-therapist. The training of MST-teams in Norway started in 1999.

Solution-focused approaches

Short-term therapies in various forms have become more and more common. Solution-focused therapy or solution-focused approaches have received much attention. The core is that rather than focusing on the problems and dwelling on them, the focus is on the solutions. The client and the helpers are then to design a plan around the client's life situation (Berg & miller 1992, Langslet 199). In much of this literature the eclectic relationship to theories is emphasized. So, to attach this method only to learning theories would be wrong. However, we want to put forward that the core of this method is the view that the behavior that receives attention is likely to be repeated. This is also the reason for not focusing on the problems. The focus is on that which can be mastered, and thoughts and actions

are directed towards solutions. Such an understanding of behaviour change and learning is linked to learning theory.

Improved mastering and insight based on experience

Here we will call attention to what we have found to be special about the learning theoretical models in social work practice. First is the understanding of the causal connections that social problems exist within. In these models the main focus is on the unbeneficial behaviour which is seen as learnt in interaction with the surroundings.

Secondly, the main characteristic of these models in social work is the focus on changing behaviour and conditions in the surroundings which have an influence on the behaviour. Learning new behaviour, in the meaning of mastering one owns situation and the relations to the surroundings, is central. The social worker can be seen as a teacher who aids in rebuilding competencies to improve mastering.

Behavior learnt from reinforcing conditions in the environment

One of the characteristics of learning theories is that the usual diagnostic terms are used to a lesser degree. Rather than talking about sickness diagnoses, terms like functional and non functional behavior are used. The current behavior of the individual is seen as something learnt. Further, it is assumed there is logic to why the individual learnt this behavior. It is also assumed that the behaviour was the most useful one during the situation the individual was in when the behavior was learnt. Later, or in environments with other norms, the behavior can be seen as inappropriate. Both normal and abnormal behavior is explained from the same principles.

A typical example is a child who screams to get their way. At home this can be a useful behavior to achieve the goals. Only by such acting-out behavior is the child heard. When the child comes to school and acts out the same behavior in the classroom, the behavior will be characterized as problematic and the consequences will be different. The behavior at school is not useful to the child, while at home it works.

In the models that can be placed within this tradition, one is not that concerned about getting to the bottom of the reasons that led to a behavior. This is seen as

long back in a person's life and too difficult to be in touch with. Instead, the starting point is in the here-and-now situation where the social worker aims at understanding what maintains this problematic behavior.

What would be called illness in a diagnostic tradition is rather called inappropriate behaviour. In a psycho-dynamic tradition behavior is understood in the light of the drives within the person, while in learning theories the focus is on behavior linked to learning. Phobia, for example, can be seen as a response to avoid situations where previously one has experienced scary events or seen others' reactions towards these. It is also common to link certain symbols to such situations, without them necessarily having a concrete connection.

Based on learning theory, there are three elements of interest to gain information when working with unwanted behavior:

1. At first, there needs to be an understanding of, and an agreement on, which behavior is inappropriate and unwanted and therefore ought to be changed.

2. Then the situation where the behavior occurs is illustrated.

3. Lastly, the interaction between the person and the situations needs to be mapped, and it is in this exchange that the key to understanding the unwanted behavior can be found.

One example. A father is of the opinion that his 10year old son has developed an undesirable behavior, that means, it leads to problems for the son himself. The father is concerned and wants to do something to change this development. The pattern described is that whatever it is the father suggests the son does not want to cooperate. The father experiences that he has to put in a lot of effort just for simple daily interactions. For example, during dinner when the son has to be asked many times to come to the table and the father become both angry, frustrated and desperate. When the son then arrives, the atmosphere is such that the father does not talk to the boy.

From a learning theory perspective this pattern is seen as maintained and continued by the father by giving so much attention to making the son perform daily activities. When the son then does what he is told to do, the father is so

angry that he cannot manage to talk to his son or interact in a manner which can be received as pleasant for the son. The boy wants attention from his father, but to do so he has to show resistance. He experiences that protesting in daily life activities is the type of behavior that makes him receive the attention he wants. They are now in a circle which will not be changed until new behavior is learnt.

Social learning theory also focuses on how the individual views and thinks about the experiences they have had, have now, and will have in the future. Negative thoughts about one self will just lead to maintaining the circle which leads to unwanted behavior. Through experiences that are experienced as problematic, the image of oneself as a failure will be maintained.

Even though early learning is recognized in order to understand the causal connections, it is mainly the here-and-now situations which are given attention and worked on in order to achieve change. The situations are analyzed to reach a common understanding and an agreement of desirable changes, and to proceed in the work towards change.

The relationship between the social worker and the client is focused on strengthening the ability of mastering through problem-solving

Social work practice influenced by learning theory has improved mastering and competency building as the goal. The goal is to reach a more desirable behavior in actions and emotional reactions as well as in intellectual contexts, through supporting the client in performing new experiences and processing these. A connection between thoughts, feelings and actions is required here.

A characteristic of learning theories is that one strives to achieve measurable and realistic goals. It is seen as important to structure the road towards the goal. A central part of the work is to build up the belief that one is capable of mastering "something". Building up the experience of mastering something is not something that can be achieved through conversation or talk only. Actions and practical tasks are therefore implemented in the process. In examination of methods in this tradition it has been shown that problem solving and change of certain defined areas are emphasized in order to achieve improved mastering.

This approach can create virtuous circles when living in a chaotic situation. To 'tidy up' problems and setting clear targets which are achievable can in itself have this effect. It is not only professionals or employers who have the need to see that goals can be reached. For a person in a difficult life situation this learning to clean up and receive help and support in setting clear goals and then to see those goals achieved can contribute to a feeling of more control of what happens in one owns life.

Alveberg Haram and Hoeyer Amundsen (1995: 107) present the following examples of situations where short-term methodology can be useful.

1. In an acute and concrete difficult situation.

2. When the problem that has occurred is linked to a loss or a reduction of social functioning.

3. When the client's aversion of the difficult situation is so great that it creates motivation for change.

4. When the actual problem can be linked to a specific area.

5. The problem ought not to have a long prehistory related to the client's personality.

Even though the points above only are meant as examples of situations where it can be useful to use short-term methodology, we find these to reveal the core of these action models: social functioning in need of change and a defined understanding of the problem and goal for the work ahead.

The fact that the clients themselves formulate the goals and are active in the process is emphasized strongly in task-centered short-term methods. This is interesting seen in the light of the criticism of learning theory linked to manipulation of behavior. The social worker is given a much stronger role as a teacher within the action models in learning theories than in the other theories. The social worker is seen as the pedagogue who helps the client to 'see' the context in which their own and others behavior functions within. The social worker helps the client to identify and put into words the conditions he or she

wants to change, and to what they want to change it into. Then the social worker, together with the client, is to make a detailed strategic plan, which leads to the goals.

The client is to have practical tasks during the process, and the social worker is to instruct and guide the implementation. At last, the social worker together with the client assess if the desired outcomes have been reached.

"The tree" from *Naiv Super* by Erlend Loe – Learning takes place in the social environment

Here we present an extract from Erled Loe's novel Naive Super. The text imparts the principles in learning theories translated into interpersonal actions in daily life. Then we will discuss the story in light of learning theories, and the main questions are: How to unlearn unwanted behavior? How to reinforce wanted behavior? What is conveyed in the reactions that are chosen? Where does learning take place? How do we contribute to the learning process in each other?

Extract from Erlend Loe, Naive Super, translated by Tor Ketil Solberg:

> My grandparents live in a yellow wooden house they built a long time ago. They have a big garden that they've always spent a lot of time on. Flowers and trees and bushes mean a lot to them. They know all the names and when things are supposed to be planted and when they have to be watered and pruned. They often talk about plants and give flowers to friends and family. It's been that way for as long as I can remember.
>
> When they built the house, my grandfather planted an apple tree. At the bottom of the garden. I have never seen that tree. It was gone when I was born.
>
> But I've heard about it.
>
> When the tree had grown for many years, it started to yield apples. A lot of apples. My grandmother used to make juice and preserves from the apples.
>
> It was a good apple tree.

But then something happened.

It had been a good summer and the apples were nice and big. They were about to be picked.

But one morning the tree had been destroyed. Several thick branches were lying on the ground. My grandfather said it looked bad. It would not grow apples again. The tree was going to die.

My grandfather went inside to give my grandmother the sad news. Then he took off his work clothes, put on something more appropriate, and went down the lane past the cemetery and down to the college.

There he spoke to the principal.

The college acted, and after some time three young students came forward.

They had been out pinching apples and things had got a little out of control.

They had very guilty consciences.

It was a prank. Not a big thing, but serious enough. And both my grandfather and the principal were concerned with sorting things out fair and square.

A new apple tree cost 150 kroner in those days. It was agreed that the boys should pay for a new tree.

They would pay 50 kroner each.

My grandfather told me it was a lot of money back then.

The boys would pay a weekly sum for the rest of that autumn and well into spring, until everything was paid back and they were even.

My grandfather had himself been to that college and he knew the boys didn't have a lot to get by on. They were boarders, some of them were far away from home and their families had already dug deep into their pockets in order to send them to college. They had to take money for the apple tree out of their own allowances. That probably meant any expensive and boyish activities had to be limited considerably. They could hardly buy anything, not go to the cinema, not treat the girls to a soda, pretty much nothing at all.

Every Saturday the boys came dejectedly to my grandparent's door to pay. They said very little. They just held out their hands and dropped the coins into my grandfather's huge palm. He nodded gravely and confirmed thereby that things were going the way they should. It went on that way. Winter came and went, and then spring.

In May the garden was once again in bloom and the polytechnic was about to go on vacation. The boys were going home for summer. When they came by for the last time, they were all dressed up. It was something of an occasion for them. They rang the doorbell and my grandmother invited them in. She had made coffee and waffles. The boys were served and they made the last payment and shook my grandparents' hands.

The case was closed.

The boys were relieved. They cheered up, and for the first time they talked with my grandparents. They told them about school and summer. They told where they came from. Their faces were happy. The debt was paid. They were cleansed and could finally hold their heads high.

After a while the boys got up to leave. Goodbyes were said, and they walked towards the door.

Then my grandfather got up.

Hang on, he said, there was one more thing.

And the boys stopped. My grandfather crossed the floor. He went over to the big kitchen dresser and opened it. He stuck his hand deep inside it and came out with three envelopes. Then he walked over to the boys and gave one to each of them.

The boys couldn't quite understand. They looked at each other. Then they opened the envelopes and tears started running down their cheeks.

My grandfather had given them their money back. My grandfather declared that he had always intended to give back the money. This was not about money, he said.

I'm thinking about the boys. They're grown-ups today. Probably over fifty years old.

They must have had the feeling that the world was good. That things fitted together. That something meant something.

I wonder what they are doing now. They probably have families themselves, and gardens with apple trees.

Principles in learning theory translated into action in daily life

The grandfather's reaction towards the boys' behavior, and the approach he chose, can be interpreted in line with the principles in learning theory. Firstly, he sets clear boundaries by reacting to the boys destruction of the apple tree. He visits the principle at school, and to make his business clear he dresses for a formal occasion. The story gets known at school and the guilty ones are advised to turn themselves in. The boys own up and are confronted with their unacceptable behavior. The boys are then given a possibility to make up for it. They are given *moderate negative consequences*. The consequences are understandable, they are painful, but they are bearable.

The grandfather gets *involved* in the boys and shows interest by starting a process that goes during winter and spring. There are clear arrangements about what is expected from the boys. Every week they pay back by going to the grandfather to deliver the money. The grandfather is prepared when they arrive, and by this he shows that he takes the arrangement seriously. The consequences stretch over a

long time and provide the boys with many opportunities to think about their actions.

What happens on the last day of repayment is an example of positive reinforcement. This day the grandparents invite the boys into their house, they have a friendly chat and by this the grandparents show that the case is now over and done with. They have settled the account, and can now call it quits. The fact that the boys have dressed up to mark the closure shows that they also are prepared to mark the settling of the account. They are prepared for a dignified closure. The arrangement has been clear and possible to carry out even though they have felt it throughout the whole year.

However, with the farewell the boys are given a surprise by a reward they have not foreseen. This action can be seen as an additional award due to their loyalty towards the repayment. It also shows the boys that money has not been the important factor for the grandfather. It is possible to assume that they will learn something about having values even when they demand much effort. These ideals also show that material possessions are not the most important thing for the grandparents. These actions indicate that what is most important is to take responsibility and get involved in rearing the youth, who at first were unknown to the grandparents. The reward of the repayment of the money is in this way linked to the learning of values translated into practical action and the importance of this.

The story exemplifies the importance of setting clear boundaries, paying attention, punishing unacceptable actions by bearable and clear agreements, and last, but not least, rewarding behavior which is perceived as good. It also shows how important apparently periphery persons in the social environment can be for learning. The story reminds us about the responsibility we all have for "seeing" each other in daily life and care.

Criticism of learning theory in social work

Social work has had a double-edged relationship to learning theories. On the one hand the methodology developed through learning theory traditions in the 1960s was welcomed by many as a reaction towards the psychodynamic model. On the other hand, it was difficult to accept the view of human beings expressed by many

behaviorists and on which the theories were based on. Watson argued that human beings had nothing to be developed from within, almost everything is formed from the outside. He was of the opinion that children could nearly be formed without any inner limitations. He viewed the human being as very close to animals in regard to how the development takes place (Watson 1924).

The perspective on human life that Watson expressed stood in stark contrast to social work's emphasis on the uniqueness of each individual. In social work it has been important to emphasize and maintain respect for human beings as unique. "The human being cannot be treated as within a category, all persons have to be met as unique", expresses a view which can be found in most books on methods in social work whatever theoretical approach the methods are part of. When Watson says that the world would be much better for example if we in 20 years stopped having children except for the ones raised for special experimental purposes, then this expresses a view of human behaviour as something possible to control down to the minuscule details via external influence. Aldous Huxley described in his novel Brave New World in 1932, a society, accurately planned, filled with people who were genetically manipulated and raised to preserve their defined functions. This scary scenario received great attention and a discussion around the view of the human being that behaviorism based itself on. Watson was not concerned with a view of society. He wanted to form and impart an objective science and faith in the future. Feelings, he stated, baffle the behavior.

Gradually, the view of the human being as an "empty box" was toned down in learning theories. It was now said that it did not refute that there were mental processes within the human being. These were, however, seen as unavailable before they expressed themselves in a behavior. Skinner also argued that there were innate differences which raised possibilities as well as limitations to how fast a person learnt something. Yet, he was also focused on the external, observable behavior as the foundation for the influence of the learning process.

The emphasis on the mental processes in learning theory became more prominent because they were used to influence learning of new behavior, relearn or change behavior. This emphasis of complex mental processes in learning made learning theories more accessible for social work. Many of the methods also emphasize the active role the individual themselves can take in order to improve

their surroundings. The individual's participation in their own change of behavior and the change of their surroundings is highlighted as we have seen in the task-centred short-term models and their methodology.

Even though mental processes are seen as important in learning theory and are used in changing behavior, the view of the human being is overall deterministic. In Freud's theory, a biological deterministic view on human beings is the foundation. In learning theories the determinism is linked to the surroundings. Learning theories, both behaviorism and social learning theory, are strongly influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution (Atkinson et al 1993). The learning process as seen in learning theories is thought of as going through a process where the individual has chosen the behavior that seems most useful to survive in the best way possible. In the same way the species have developed through natural selection.

The right to self-determination is a central ethical principle in social work. At times however, acting in accordance with this principle can lead us to refrain from intervening in order to help. In situations about life or death, either of the client themselves or in relation to others, such decisions are easier. Most of the time in social work though, there are no such immediate consequences. And one is then faced with an ethical dilemma where there is no "correct" answer.

Olsson (1993) has undertaken research in Sweden among social workers in a broad spectre of institutions, to find what theories they used in understanding the problems and for the actions chosen. The social workers were given examples of difficult life situations and were asked to use their own words to describe how they understood the causal connections and they were also asked to describe how they would proceed to help the person/s. Later, Olsson categorized the answers in the following categories of explanations: failure of care, poor upbringing, traumatic events, stress, inner resources, health, lack of material resources and interaction. In the categories for treatments and actions he used the following categories: compensation for what the client previously has missed, relearning of behavior, emotional support, the role of a lawyer by 'taking the case", processing of previous experiences and practical help.

He then found that learning of new behavior and methods of mastering a situation were the categories most used by the social workers, and these were

linked to failure of care and failures in the upbringing. Olsson sees these methods of understanding and action as closely linked to learning theories. The treatment they described included awards, punishment and model-learning.

This is interesting because social workers have to a large extent been opposed to learning theories due to their roots in behaviorism. The point here was to ask if much of the social work undertaken could be linked to learning theories when analyzed. Relatively few methods are interested in finding such links to behavioristic roots, also because of the problematic relationship to manipulation of behavior and coercion, which is in open conflict with one of the most central principles in social work; the client's right to self determination. In later treatment methods and approaches which can be linked to learning, having the client's own goals as the starting point is strongly emphasized.

Summary

Central characteristics of learning theories in social work
• Behavior is seen as something learnt.

• Behavior includes thoughts, feelings and external observable behaviour, which are assumed as interrelated/connected.

• Behavior is learnt through the reactions from others.

• Reinforcement of behavior takes place by rewards, or by removing something that has been experienced as negative.

• Reducing/weakening of behavior takes place by removing something that has been experienced as positive or by implementing something negative.

• Learning also takes place by observing models.

• Learning also takes place by insight where complex connections to previous experiences take place.

• Focus on a specific behavior will increase this behavior.

• Emphasis on learning in social situations.

Action models and the relationship of social worker – client.
- Change of problem-solving strategies includes external behavior, thoughts and feelings.

- Mastering and building of competency are central goals.

- Problem-solving is crucial.

- Action is influenced by "Learning by doing".

- The collaboration is set for a limited time.

- The client's goals are the starting point.

- Focus is on what is useful and what can be mastered.

- The role of the social worker is influenced by the role of a pedagogue.

Value orientation
- The human being is formed by learning.

- A deterministic view on the human being – the reaction from the surroundings form the person.

- The behavior that is perceived as the most advantageous to survive in best possible ways has the best opportunity for further development.

Criticism
- Social work becomes too much "technique", where social problems are "fixed".

- Social problems are seen in connection with the individual's functioning and societal connections are "forgotten".

- Too limited – too much focus on sub-problems.

- The demand for evaluation and measurability can deteriorate the relationship of social worker – client.

Chapter 5: Conflict Theories in Social Work

Introduction

Conflict theories are theories about society which emphasize that conflicts of interests do exist and humans are in conflict with each other in relation to resources, prestige and power. In sociology, conflict theories are seen as contrary to consensus theories. Consensus theories presuppose that people in a society have common interests and that differences, interests, prestige and power are necessary for the whole society as an organism being able to act in harmony. Consensus theories are distinguished by seeing society as stable and harmonious. Conflicts, in this perspective, are solved through interaction between various groups aiming for what is "best for the whole society".

The legal system, for example, is seen as a product of the whole society working to do the best for us all. Both the legal system and society are described by concepts, which underline attention to fellowship and the absence of deeper differences in the population. Technical terms such as "the interests of society" and "society construction" are used. Such an understanding of society exists in a functional perspective in sociology. With this view of society, problems at an individual and society-level are explained as a consequence of insufficient integration of norms. Durkheim has had a great influence within this theory and model development. Functionalism has not been interested in class characteristics of norms, equal rights and gender policy nor underprivileged groups in society. One could rather say to the contrary. It has not been questioned who is setting norms, goals and frameworks. A functionalistic view on society is not critical. It presupposes differences where each individual takes responsibility for their part in society to make it operate harmoniously.

From a conflict perspective, however, there exists another opinion of how society is operating. Society is distinguished by difference, conflicts, coercion and change. Conflicts presuppose a solution through struggle between individuals, groups or classes where some will win and others will lose. In a conflict perspective aberrations are not seen as a result of badly integrated norm systems. One is more interested in who has the power to set the norms and define what is an aberration. Norms are related to the fact that they are made by those who have

the power to oppress. Conflict theory has provided analytical tools to set social consequences in relation to the structure and processes of society. From this perspective weak and vulnerable groups and individuals can be understood based on their position in society. They are seen as "oppressed", as groups that have been placed in a position of powerlessness that they are unable get out of. "Power", "powerlessness" and "control" are central technical terms in this understanding.

Early conflict theories draw much of their terminology and understanding of contexts from Marxist theory. Later, the term conflict theory has been used with a broader meaning. Freire (1974) and his contribution with "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed" has been important for the evolution of conflict theory for use in social work. He is interested in how people in powerless situations can become active and change their own situation and the society they are part of.

Feminist theory has been focused on oppression of women and has within it a liberating aspect. What has been happening in feminist theory has also inspired social work. The same can be said about the understanding of contexts and working methods developed within newer social movements.

In conflict models in social work, individuals' and groups' problems are seen in relation to system and society. The focus is on power and powerlessness. Work is directed towards the mobilization of power in each individual through consciousness-raising, and towards changing problem causing conditions in society.

"Empowerment" is a central term in social work. Linden (1991) translates the term into the Norwegian expression "maktmobilisering" (power mobilization). We will define empowerment as a process where both mobilization of power in the individual and mobilization of power to change conditions causing problems in the system and society are a goal. Incorporated in a conflict theoretical understanding is the attention given to the relation between micro and macro level. The relationship between these two levels and the area between them become important.

Conflict theories brought back community-oriented social work in the 70s. After a waning interest in the 80s, approaches based on conflict theoretical analysis of

contexts are now growing again in the 90s. Such approaches can be called "critical social work" ("kritisk sosialt arbeid"), "radical social work"("radikalt sosialt arbeid") and "anti-oppressive social work" (frigjørende sosialt arbeid").

Origins and development

A critical perspective of society

A conflict theoretical perspective presupposes that sometimes the balance of power is so uneven one cannot see that there is a struggle. The oppression is silent and covered. The language conceals and conserves the interests of those in power. So uncovering "oppressive" or "concealed" language, terminology, routines, cultures or structures are central in conflict theory. There is a critical approach to what exists and one questions the obvious. Conflict theory represents such a critical perspective of society.

Marx and Freire

Marxist theory can be said to be the origin of conflict theory and we will start with some central characteristics and terms. Karl Marx' (1818–1883) works are described as philosophy, political ideology and sociology. The three most important theories (Outhwaite1996) of Marx were the theory about paid labour's alienation, the theory of historical materialism and the theory about capitalism.

Paid labour and alienation

In this theory two conditions are presupposed:

• work expresses humankind's true essence

• work is performed as paid labour.

Marx is of the opinion that human's free, productive work is where they express their special essence, their true nature. This is where humans differ from animals. How we work, that is to say, what we do in practice, affects our consciousness and our understanding. At the same time our consciousness and our understanding also affect what we do in practice. In this way self-realisation and knowledge is closely connected to work. The individual is in a dialectic relationship

to the social world. The individual creates history, simultaneously as he/she is constructed by history.

Marx saw paid labour as an unnatural form for work. The paid labourer does not decide what is to be produced, how or why. He only exchanges his labour contribution with a salary, while the production itself is indifferent to him. This happens when the person making a thing is deprived the thing: The reciprocal action between people, their work ethics and the products, is interrupted. As a paid labourer, spare time becomes the time when one tries to realize one self as a person, as a human.

Alienation involves people experiencing, feeling or seeing their surroundings as something essentially different from themselves. This is in contrast to experiencing oneself as at one with the surroundings. Alienated, one experiences oneself as an alien in one's own life. If people are deprived what they are making (do not have control over it), or if people "take" things that others have created, then people become alienated from the product. Marx saw not only the paid labourer, but also the owners of the production tools as alienated from the product and the work.

How people see themselves also affects how other people see them. The fact that people become alienated from their inner nature means that they become alienated from other people as well. It affects both the relationship to one self and to other people.

Historical materialism

To understand historical change and development Marx focused on peoples' production of life's commodities. Human life requires the existence of food, drink, housing, clothes etc. Therefore, in understanding the development of society, it is necessary to have these materialistic conditions and how production is organized as a starting point. Marx emphasized economic conditions as the force for development. The production contains a base and a superstructure. The "base" consists of technological requirements such as tools, machines, science, and organization and ownership. The "superstructure" consists of political institutions, laws, religions, art and science.

Marx argued that the base has a fundamental influence on the superstructure. The material factors linked to the base are seen as most important and as influencing thoughts and ideas. Marx called this materialism "dialectic" in which lies the view of the force behind society's development. He considers human constructed societies to be in constant development through the tension between opposites. Revolutions lead to one system of society to another. In ancient society with slavery the antagonism was between the free citizens and slaves. In the Middle Ages feudal society the antagonism was between the feudal landlords and the peasants, while later on it was between the aristocrats and the citizens. In his time, which Marx called a bourgeoisie or capitalistic society, the contrast is first and foremost between capitalists and workers. The contrast is linked to the ones that own the means of production and buy the working labour, and those living from selling their labour (Gaarder, 1997: 365).

The theory about capitalism

Marx viewed capitalism as an historical phenomenon which had a start, a development and an end. In Marxist's economy profit plays a central part, that is to say the worker produces more than what is necessary for reproducing the work labour. The surplus accrues to the owner. The unappeasable desire for profit is what lies behind the development of the system and leads to the struggle between the working class (the proletariat) and capitalist class (the bourgeoisie).

In a study of English economic history Marx uses terminology to describe capitalism as it is experienced by the individual worker, and as it appears in a social holistic perspective. Marx studied the inhuman consequences of capitalism and points out the alienation in this context (Marx 1844, 1859).

Marxist theory aims to provide tools to understand the driving force in the changes in society. It explains how the capitalistic means of production alienates the workers, and also how this influences interpersonal relations which are valued in accordance with the market.

"Pedagogy of the Oppressed"

Paulo Freire was a pedagogue and education minister, and a leader of a quality national adult training centre in Brazil until the military coup in 1964. His pedagogical philosophy was expressed for the first time in his doctoral thesis.

(1959) This methodology was used by those wanting to fight the illiteracy in Brazil. While in exile in Chile, Freire wrote "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"[2] which became highly influential during the 1970's.

Freire (1974) uses Marxist theory in his analysis of how social conditions affect groups and individuals. He says: "The radical who fights for the freedom of people, will not become a prisoner in a circle of security where he also locks in the reality. On the contrary, the more radical he or she is, the more completely will they enter into the reality so that they can understand it better and more easily be able to change it. The radical is not afraid of confronting, listening or seeing the world revealed. She/he does not believe that they own the historical process or that they are the suppressed's liberator, no, they are involved in the historical process to fight by their side." (translated from a Norwegian version of Freire 1992: 22). Freire was concerned about how "conscientization" (the developing of consciousness), mobilization of power and change of society, could be possible. He shows how passive and suppressed people can build self-esteem and become critical and active and participate in the construction of society. His method is based on dialogue.

Freire's middle class family experienced financial problems during the crises of the interwar period. As a consequence they moved amongst poor people. The culture he came to know and what he learned about poor peoples' reactions is what he later called "the silent culture". The ignorance and apathy that he observed in the community he lived in, he saw as clearly connected to the situation the poor were in. They were exposed to economic, social and political supremacy and paternalism and they were oppressed in a situation where they did not have the possibility to develop critical consciousness and react to the suppression. After a while he realised that the education system was one of the significant tools in maintaining this silent culture. He developed "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" and his contribution has had significance for community-oriented social work.

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[2] *The book was published in Portuguese in 1968. The first translated version in English was published in 1970 with the title Pedagogy of the Oppressed. The book was first published in Norway in 1974.*

Perspectives of human life

The view of human life which conflict based models lean towards, presupposes that the "constructed" world provides important framework and possibilities for development. At the same time they acknowledge that the individual, by his or her action, participates in the "construction process".

Conflict models have as a starting point that conflicting interests exist in society. Power is linked to social status, which again is linked to various structures in society. How this connection happens, there is no consistent opinion about. In understanding power and powerlessness, the limitations and possibilities of the individual and how alienation constricts the ability to act and influences interpersonal relations, the focus on the individual's place in these relations is essential.

Marx describes human's specific character as the "free consciousness activity". He criticizes both mechanical materialism and idealism. His view is that understanding and change are part of a dialectic unity. Freire is preoccupied with humans' longing for dignity and to be a subject acting and changing their existence. Through this he sees people moving towards constant new possibilities to a more satisfying life both individually and collectively.

The belief that each individual is capable of viewing their existence critically in dialogue with other people irrespective of how "ignorant" or passive they would be in "the silent culture" is the core of Freire's anti-oppressive pedagogy. Through this the individuals win back their right to say their own opinion and to give their existence a name.

Feminist perspectives

The radical movement in the west during the 1960s and the 1970s contributed to feminist perspectives entering the fields of social work and therapy (Dominelly and McLeod 1989). Feminist perspectives took a critical stand to methods in social work and therapies in psychiatric treatment and if they have a suppressing effect on women.

From a feministic point of view psychodynamic theory was criticized for its fundamental view on the differences between women and men, which Freud

relates to anatomical differences. He brings up instinctive dispositions given at birth and experiences of the early years of childhood. He describes how woman have to suppress them self and their masculine activities to become normal women (Freud 1916). The feminist resistance was directed at Freud's' biological instinct theory and his view on women. There has not been much of an interest to continue these ideas about women's inferiority linked to biological determinism in the psychodynamic tradition in social work. The critique in the 1970's was mainly directed at the individualization of problems which neglected to link women's problems with oppression and power structures in society.

Even though the inclusion of learning theories in social work can be seen as a critique against psychodynamic models, learning theoretical models were criticized from parties within conflict theories. The critique was directed towards goal and task oriented elements (Collins 1986). It was pointed out that the claim for positivistic science and the use of men's expressions and values was so big that the methods became alienated from women. Learning theory focuses on the organization of the environment to understand how the personality is constructed. Throughout life one learns through the conditions of reinforcement in the milieu. Even though social learning theory focuses on the outer circumstances as opposite to psychodynamic theory, it is however basically linked to the individual. The main critique towards the learning theory models was that they encouraged a way of thinking and methodology which to a great extent derived from the men's world of thinking.

From early in the 1970s, work on establishing terms and expressions with a starting point in women's worlds of experiences and values had become central in social work. There was agreement that gender is important in the understanding of social problems and the context they are an included in, and when one wants to find methods for working with problems. Early Marxist feminism was preoccupied with capitalism as the reason for patriarchy and with that, the suppression of women. They agree with Marx that patriarchy gained power together with private law of property. Here, many depart from Marxism or they find other ways. Feminists stress that the division of work that is happening both at home and in the "workforce" based on gender, is an important component to uphold both capitalism and the patriarchy. Feminists argue that women are being socialised to take on caring duties and services at home first, before their

relations to work outside the home. This justifies why women receive the lowest salary and are work labour in less costly companies. Such feminist explanations want to show that women are reproducing the workforce as well as keeping the man in the workforce by supporting him and they also act like relief work labour.

From a feminist perspective, with roots in Marxist theory, women become an important part of maintaining capitalism. At the same time women socialize the new work labour to learn the norms beneficial for the rulers.

With its origin in feminist models, work with methodology directed to specific groups in social work has been emphasized. Feminist practice is to be found in work with the neglected, the elderly, unemployed, sexually abused, refugees, mixed races and other vulnerable groups (e.g. Bricker-Jenkins 1991). Over the last decades several phenomena, related to suppressed women, have been placed on the political agenda and are now seen as public social problems. Here we are thinking of maltreatment of women, sexual abuse and incest. In Norway these problems are now seen as areas where the community should contribute both to prevent and repair them.

Based on a feminist perspective the development of the welfare state is seen as a changeover from private to public patriarchy. When women are needed in production, reproduction tasks are socialised and in this way social politics is an important point of contact between women and the state. In Norway the welfare state has taken over several caring duties which earlier were the responsibility of the family. At the same time many women have entered the workforce outside the home. Women especially have taken on these new positions within the caring services and in this way have contributed to a professionalizing of caring duties (Wærnes 1982). Distinctive for a feminist perspective of the welfare state, is the emphasis on the welfare state's effect on the private sphere. The reproduction tasks of the economic system are as important as the production tasks. Within feminist empowerment the process itself is prominent and they stress the fact that in processes where power is generated something new arises. This occurs by people sharing experiences and together exploring contexts. In this way one is interested in finding "new" knowledge; understanding of new contexts, asking new questions and coming up with new answers which lead to new strategies for action.

Social movements

Involvement in society has been expressed through various forms of being organized. The labour movement shared an analysis of contexts and had mutual goals and values. Such social movements have had and still have effect on the development of conflict theories in social work. The "old" social movements, such as the labour movement, were to a great extent based on class and workforce and had an analysis connected to conflict models. In new movements focus is placed on gender, anti – racism, environment, disabilities and age. Some of these movements are closely linked to conflict theoretical tradition. Lorents (1994) states that the feminist movement illustrates some of the main characteristics of the new social movements.

- They do not fit into the usual categories or structures of political parties and class interests.

- To a certain extent they disapprove of hierarchical systems of administration and role specialization.

- They appear as fragmented but form networks and focus on local issues as well as referring to global implications.

- They regard self-realisation, processes and group relations as important to achieve social change for freedom and identity. This is emphasized as more important than efficiency.

- Social movements challenge social work's focus on volunteer work and self help groups by emphasizing experiences from lived life as especially important.

Popple (1995) states that a main characteristic with the new social movements is to think globally and act locally.

What many people would see as a difference is that the new social movements do not act with the same "certainty" as in the 1970s. They are more open-minded and critical, also towards their own understanding and action. These late modernist movements are influenced by their contemporaries. There are no

claims that there is only one universal truth. There is not one understanding, but many. As a social worker one should not become locked into a particular line of thought and claim one approach as the only correct one. Despite this open-minded approach, we will argue that these new social movements provide fuel for conflict models in social work. The starting point is a commitment which channels together with others into changing the world, and in which lies a critique of the established society.

The area of social work practice

The development in the 1970s

Focus on the invisible Norway

The period after the Second World War was characterized by economic growth and development of social welfare and social security arrangements. The development of the welfare state from 1945 had large political agreement. The country should be rebuilt. Employment and economic growth were high. The level of education rose and also the children from the working class started to obtain education. In Norway more and more people became interested in politics and the organization and function of the society.

From 1970 the focus was placed on "the invisible Norway". It became an expression for all those who did not fit into normal society in one way or another. This included those that had an economy based on social welfare or pension, and those that lived in various institutions. 24-hour institutions were mostly based on special care principles, and it was pointed out that those living in the institutions were set aside outside of society. This 'cover up' resulted in disparagement. Thomas Mathiesen was one of those directing the focus at 'the invisible', and he was especially interested in the function of criminal-politics and what the law system did to the individual. This led to prisoners in Norwegian jails organizing themselves in KROM (Norsk forening for kriminal reform/Norwegian Organization for Criminal Reform), which also had support members outside the jails and has been active in the political debate. The organization still organizes yearly seminars.

Research in Social Sciences was important in making visible those groups that were not a part of the welfare development (Mathiesen 1971, Korpi 1971, Aubert 1972, Kolberg 1974, Løchen 1976 et al.).

Community work enters social work

Social work was strongly influenced by psychodynamic thinking and tradition in the 1960s. The field was criticised for being so focused on inner processes and individuals that it led to covering the connection between social problems and society. The critics claimed that both the understanding of why problems arose and conduct were incomplete, partly concealed and did not display solidarity with the clients. It was in the 1970s that conflict theory perspectives began to gain a foothold in social work (Payne 1991: 201). Community work became an important working method towards a more critical perspective on society, even though conflict models influenced other methods within social work as well. From the beginning of the 1970s community work was taught at the Schools of Social Work in Norway. Community work is not only based on conflict theories but the political ideology that brought community work into the field of social work and many of those preoccupied with community work in the 1970s represented a view on society and an attitude to the field which can be linked to conflict theory.

Applied research

Norwegian social scientists belonging to a conflict theoretical tradition were also involved in trying to combine research and action. "Applied research" had already been used since 1960 within labour market research.[3] From 1970 applied research was welcomed in the social sciences. One of the most famous field experiments in the sociological tradition was 'The Nord-Odal project' (Nord-Odal is a community

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[3]   *In the beginning of 1960 a cooperation-project between LO ("Landsorganisasjonen i Norge"/"The workers organization in Norway") and NAF ("Norsk arbeidsgiverforening" / "Norwegian Employers Organization") started, where field-experiments formed the main part. The projects were connected with "Arbeidsforskningsinstituttet" (Institute of Work /Labour Research in Oslo) and "Institutt for industriell miljøforskning" (Institute for Industrial Environmental Science and Research) in Trondheim. Inspired by Einar Thorsrud (Kalleberg 1992).*

in Norway), which Løchen organized. Mathiesen was also a central figure in the sociological tradition with applied research directed towards reforms of the prison system (Kalleberg 1992).

Applied research differs from other research within social sciences with its strategy for action and development and imparting of knowledge. Applied research's purpose is to support social changes in local and organizational contexts. The parties involved, who would be residents or members of an organization, are the ones to decide on the objectives of the change and participate actively in the progress. The process of the change is the dimension of the action. The goal is both to develop local knowledge, which the employers can use, as well as developing general research related knowledge (Engelstad 1987).

Social work

It is not only in the analysis of the function of social politics that a Marxist approach was used in Norway in the 70s. Also, in social work there was an endeavour to use Marxist principals in general. In a booklet from Socialistic Information Association (Sosialistisk Opplysningsforbund) in 1979 with the title "What Sort of Social Work" the following is discussed: What is socialistic practice in social work – and how should one respond to professionalizing and organizing from a socialistic viewpoint? From Stjernø's summary of principals which ought to guide socialistic social work, it is made clear that not only does such a work have an expressed theoretical framework, but also an ideology. This has given grounds for objections to those principles. The reply has been that other theories are based on ideologies and a system of values as well, even though it is not expressed as clearly as here. It is argued that ideology and decision making which is clear, is better than the one being hidden.

Conflict theories brought changes to individual, group and society levels in social work. In the English tradition, conflict models in social work are often described as "anti-oppressive practice" (frigjørende sosialt arbeid). Much of the literature of social work, based on a conflict-theory approach, is preoccupied with groups that have been exposed to oppression and negative valuation, such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, immigrants and others. Also the situation of women has been in focus, as previously mentioned. Understanding mechanisms where negative valuation is linked to symbols, language and is implicit in what is

not expressed, is vital. Further, understanding how these mechanisms effect action and decisions and result in feelings of powerlessness in individuals is essential.

Leonard (1977) is another early representative for conflict models in social work. Methods he calls attention to are:

1. Dialogic relations where the social worker participates in consciousness-raising through dialog. Leonard refers to Freire as an inspirator.

2. Group consciousness-raising: The group is central in consciousness-raising work when an individual cannot be conscious on one's own. Group support helps, and the group can be critical as well as being a motivator and a challenger.

3. Organising and preparing are seen as important skills and knowledge to possess in work as a social worker, both with individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and local communities.

In work with people with disabilities, especially relating to the closure of HVPU-institutions,[4] the concept of normalizing has contributed to analysis that aims at revealing devaluing structures, practice and use of symbols. Wolfensberger has in many books from the 1970s/1980s described a process where devaluated groups are given roles which entail a devalued identity and status. This again leads to the defense of other less desirable consequences. Wolfensberger (1972) refers to a method for working with revaluation of the role as "Social Role Valorization". This has been translated to Norwegian as "verdsetting av sosial rolle", valuation of social role, (Kristiansen 1993). The method is not directly linked to conflict theory, but the methodology presumes that groups are oppressed and devalued in the roles given to them, so in that way it is related to conflict theory models.

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[4] *HVPU was an abbreviation for 'Health Care for People with a Mental Disability' (Helsevernet for psykisk utviklingshemmede), which was a county municipal institution service for people with disabilities. HVPU was closed 01.01.1991.*

Solomon (1976) argues that value estimation should be institutionalized and integrated with the social institutions being established. Institutions are based on standardized routines. One reason for this is that assistance and behavior should be predictable for the clients. It is here assumed that there exists an objective platform on which rules and routines can be built. Based on a conflict theoretical understanding there exists no such neutral basis. On the contrary there are conflicting interests where one institution serving its own interests does not necessarily serve others. Those having the power influence the construction of the institutions, and it is assumed that the interests of weak and vulnerable groups are not being attended to. Based on a perspective like this, institutions can also be seen as discriminating in their action, where vulnerable groups are unfavourable. "Power" and "powerlessness" are important notions in understanding such situations. Solomon is interested in the connections between power, powerlessness and the processes for human progress and development. She explains the development as follows:

Individuals begin their experiences through a complex series of events conveyed via the family. The experiences involve the self, significant others and the surroundings. (we can here see traces of an interactionist perspective). These experiences result in personal resources such as self-image, ways of thinking, knowledge, physical and mental health.

The personal resources lead to development of interpersonal and technical skills, for example power of empathy, organizational skills and management skills. Personal and interpersonal resources as well as technical skills can then be used to enter a new role, and obtain a behaviour that is accepted by the norm system. Such roles can be the parent role, various roles of employees and roles related to organizations or political roles.

A negative valuation of minorities and groups, and subsequent discrimination, can affect the individual at various stages in the complex circle of development. It can affect the individual's power in handling problems either indirect or direct. Solomon separates "indirect" and "direct power-blockages". Indirect power-blockages are the ones integrated through evolvement, experiences and interaction with significant others. Direct power-blockages refer to hindrances for access to resources, both society wise and resources channelled through

education and support. Solomon is especially interested in the work with mixed races in poor suburbs. The model focuses on the idea that it is the individual themselves that must act, that can act and ought to act, to change the situation. She finds this important even though the reasons for the problems are linked to power structures and downgrading which influenced the individual.

After the settlement tradition was nearly over, professional social work was characterized by work with individuals, families and groups. Even though many held the opinion that social work has always been concerned about "humans in their environment", both the understanding of the connection of individual to society and work methods were limited. We will argue that conflict theory brought community oriented work back to social work.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

The dialogue

Freire is focused on the dialogue as a meeting between people to give name to existence. He sees this dialogue as a requirement for humans to reach the true value of human life. In the word itself, which is the essence of the dialogue, there are two dimensions; reflection and action. Those two parts are included in such a basic interaction that if one of the parts is only given partial attention then the other part will suffer immediately. Freire argues that what he calls a real word contains both an action- and a reflection dimension within it. Consequently, to express a real word becomes the same as transforming the world. Deprived of the dimension of action, the reflection will suffer and the word appears as alienated and empty words. On the other side, the word transformed to activism without reflection on its context, will make dialogue impossible because dialogue is about changing the world. To exist as a human, is to give name to the world and thereby transforming it (Freire, 1970: 75).

The dialogue between humans is not a meeting where one is transferring ideas from one person to another. Neither is it an exchange of arguments or a polemic discussion. Because the dialogue is a constructive action it can not be a situation where some people name on behalf of others. The dialogue is a conquering of the world with a goal of liberating the humans. Freire states that love for the world and humans is a prerequisite for the dialogue. Love is an action characterized by

courage and thereby love is involvement for other people (Freire, 1970: 77,78). The dialogue demands a great belief in humans and their abilities to create something new. The dialogic human has faith in other people and their ability to create. Such a belief is not naive, because one is aware that humans' ability for creating can be impaired by alienation, and this insight becomes a challenge and does not interfere with the belief in humans' possibilities and true nature.

The atmosphere in the dialogue is characterized by mutual confidence based on love, humility and faith. Hope is essential and leads to an ongoing search together with others.

Anti-dialogue

As a contrast, Freire describes anti-dialogue as relations characterized by oppression. Anti-dialogue is the opposite of dialogue. The first characteristic of an anti-dialogue is "conquest". The antidialogical human aims at conquering others through his/her relations with them. This can be using the toughest means possible or more refined methods which can appear as having care for others, paternalism (Freire, 1970: 133,134). The conqueror forces his objectives on the conquered. Freire reminds us that one person is not either anti-dialogical or dialogical, but that it depends on the context. There is no oppression which is not anti-dialogical, and there is no anti-dialogue where the oppressors are not exploiting the oppressed (Freire, 1970: 136).

Another fundamental characteristic of anti-dialogical action that Freire points at is "divide and rule"(Freire, 1970: 139). It is in the interest of the oppressors to weaken the oppressed, isolate them and create a distance between them. This can be done by powerful groups or cultural activity used to manipulate people to believe that they are being helped. As characteristics of oppressive cultural actions, Freire refers to naive professionals who have to concentrate on details of a problem, rather than seeing it as a part of a whole.

In "community development" projects the more a region or area is broken down into "local communities," without the study of these communities both as totalities in themselves and as parts of another totality (the area, region, and so forth) – which in its turn is part of still larger totality (the nation, as part of the continental totality) – the more alienation is intensified. And the more alienated

people are, the easier it is to divide them and keep them divided. These focalized forms of action, by intensifying the focalised way of life of the oppressed (especially in rural areas), hamper the oppressed from perceiving reality critically and keep them isolated from the problems of oppressed men in other areas (Freire, 1970: 138).

Freire stresses the importance for the oppressors in keeping the "divide and rule" strategy hidden. This is done by giving the impression that the strategy is "defending" the oppressed. At the same time the people, trying to reveal this "hide and rule" strategy, are accused of destroying what the builders (read oppressors) are trying to build up (Freire, 1970: 138).

A third dimension with anti-dialogical action is "manipulation." Like the strategy of division it is a means of conquering and keeping the power. By means of manipulation, the rulers try to conform the masses to their objectives. This can be various forms of organizations over which the dominant elite is in control, such as inviting the oppressed to participate in a dialogue, where the goal is to reach the objectives already decided upon by the elite (Freire, 1970: 144).

The last of Freire's characteristics of antidialogical action is "cultural invasion". The oppressors impose their view of life on the oppressed and restrain their creativity by controlling opinions and statements. The invaders become the creators while the invaded become the objects. And Freire claims, *"It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves."* (Freire, 1970: 52).

Praxis

"… this discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism …" (Freire, 1970: 52). Action without analysis and reflection or analysis without action is seen as useless. After analysis, action should follow, and actions and experiences should be a part of analysis.

In Freire's dialogical action theory subjects join together to change their situation and existence. The dialogue transforms the individual from being an object, to become a subject in his or her own life, and act in concordance with society.

Freire focused on the fear of freedom. This fear should be fought with education and by becoming involved in critical dialogue. As long as the oppressed are ignorant of the reasons for their situation they will continue accepting the oppression. With their perception of reality and view of themselves, the oppressed will continue to experience themselves as objects. (Cf. the concept of alienation in Marxism.) The hopeless situation of the oppressed can lead to destructive behavior for themselves, or the people close to them. "The steam" is often let out at home or reduced by the use of drugs. After a while the problems at home will increase. Through dialogical situations, where subjects can meet, critical consciousness arises. For Freire, practice and reflection are indissolubly connected. He uses the term "praxis" to describe this connection between action and reflection.

Anti-oppressive practice

Dominelli (1998: 7) defines "anti-oppressive practice", as we have translated "frigjørende sosialt arbeid", as follows:

Anti-oppressive practice is a form of social work practice which addresses social divisions and structural inequalities in the work that is done with "clients" (users) or workers. Anti-oppressive practice aims to provide more appropriate and sensitive services by responding to people's need regardless of their social status. Anti-oppressive practice embodies a person – centred philosophy, an egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people's lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aims to empower users by reducing the negative effects of hierarchy in their immediate interaction and the work they do together.

It can be seen that Dominelly, like Freire, embraces both an individual-centred philosophy and a set of values which considers structural differences. She emphasizes equality, and points out that anti-oppressive practice is not only about understanding. It is also necessary to be involved in the tough realities of many of the clients and as a social worker trying to change these. Dominelli (1997: 238) regards the following principles as important for social workers who work with people experiencing devaluation and oppression. She argues that these

principles can be used to develop a new practice, which comprises both a micro and a macro level:

- Redefine what it is to be professional to avoid inflicting clients with another layer of oppression

- Ask the clients what they want and listen to them

- Realise that people are living their lives in both private and public spheres

- Provide information so the users themselves can take advantage of it

- Challenge personal, institutional and cultural forms of oppression

This implies that the social worker has to review methods and procedures in their laws and routines and their own practice, critically. This also includes practice which on the surface seems to be attending to the clients needs. Dominelli is focusing on the clients' influence. Asking for their opinions is not enough; it must be given importance.

Empowerment; mobilization of power

Empowerment is a central concept in this context. Previously we have discussed and translated the term as mobilization of power in the individual and to change problematic conditions. In social work's literature, the expression is linked to various models with a starting point in different understandings of how this mobilization can be possible. Often it is connected to radical social work based on a conflict theory approach. In this tradition, it is emphasized that empowerment should not be limited to psychological processes, but should also include work for changes at system and society levels. Here we present some authors and how they connect the term empowerment with conflict theories.

Slettebø (2000) describes the approach within empowerment as goal, method and process in social work. The goal is described as increasing the real power for each client, group or local community, so as to prevent or change conditions leading to the problems they are confronted with. The method focuses on equality, partnership and cooperation, client participation, a power analysis of the client's situation and mobilization of resources. The approach is resource oriented

and it uses Freire (1974) and his dialogical education to activate the client's own resources. The process is described as a consciousness raising – process, where the client is given the possibility to be above an individual analysis of their problems and to see how conditions in society affect or cause problems. Slettebø concludes with saying empowerment is as much about collective and political liberation as psychological development processes, and it is almost impossible to distinguish between individual and collective liberation. His argumentation is based on a radical and critical perspective of society.

During a discussion of the normalization- and empowerment tradition related to caring policies, Askheim (1998) claims that empowerment challenges professionals to take a stand. There must be a realization of disabled people as a group which is exposed to oppression. The professionals must take a stand in a society analysis and see the profession in a political context. Based on the previous, the professions cannot only focus on the individual's disability but they must view the consequences of the disability as a phenomenon constructed by society. At a psychological level this will involve strengthening the individual's self esteem, skills and knowledge. Through this process people with disabilities can stand as political participants. At an economic level it can include a fair distribution overall. It can also be about a more diverse and tolerant culture which challenges prejudices and discrimination. Askheim underlines that empowerment thinking draws its inspiration from Freier's (1974) pedagogy.

Both Askheim and Slettebø refer to Guiterrez (1990) when they elaborate on the process of mobilisation of power. Guiterrez (1990) describes four parts of the process for developing critical and political consciousness:

1. Developing confidence of own competency in creating and influencing events in one's own life. This concerns strengthening the individual's belief in themselves, developing the feeling of own personal strength, contributing to power and mastering, as well as developing each individual's ability to take initiative and act.

2. To develop group consciousness entails developing an understanding of how political structures influence individual and group experiences. Working in groups with equals and developing group-consciousness is seen as essential,

and is at times offered as the most important means to promote empowerment.

3. Reducing the tendency to blame oneself for one's own difficulties. Underprivileged groups often have a tendency to internalize the oppression and blame them self for a powerless situation. The belief in the possibility of change is often least in those having the greatest difficulties. In consciousness-raising, reducing self-reproach becomes essential.

4. A personal responsibility for change becomes a consequence to avoid shifting all of the responsibility onto society.

Black and Stephen's (1985) description of methods for work with people with psychological dysfunctions is clearly based on Freire (1974). They want people to take back the control of their lives; become a subject and not an object in their own life or in their environment. The clients explore the context, which their life is a part of, through dialogue. The clients are seen as oppressed by material poverty and institutionalization, and that they have received feed back on their self-image and explanations for their own situation in a way which contributes to keeping them passive. By participating and exploring new ways of viewing contexts and new ways of behavior, the goal is that the client will improve their self-image, be active in their own life and begin to realize their own resources. Black and Stephen call this main-therapy- process for "validation".

Principles for praxis in social work

Ronnby (1992: 250) has tried to develop a model of action based on praxiology. He refers to Freire and is concerned with people's possibilities of doing something about oppressive conditions. He is interested in the flexibility of action models, in contrast to social work as an art of engineering. In "social engineering" he sees "a kind of behavioral technology in combination with social administrative decency". This suits the technocratic spirit where the logical, the practical, the problem solving, the instrumental, the methodical, the disciplined and the planned are highly valued.

In contrast to such methods where the social worker becomes a technician who performs technical skills, Ronnby put forward a socia-pedagogical approach where

the social worker has the role of a catalyst. The social worker's aim is to initiate social processes which make action possible for those having difficulties. He describes the models of problem solving as complex patterns, where knowledge combined with life experience, visions and skills are all interwoven. The foundation for such a social-pedagogical model of action, with its roots in praxiology, can be summarized into seven principles:

1   The principle of involvement; the social worker should be strongly involved in the problems and put oneself in the situation.

2   The principle of grounding; problem solving, activity and action must be grounded in the people. (people is here referring to the people who are having difficulties)

3   The field principle; work together with the ones involved should be in their environment.

4   The principle of mobilization; the work is about awakening and developing people's latent resources and abilities.

5   The principle of action; people influence and change their situation through active and participating action. People themselves must be involved in the transforming process.

6   The principle of consciousness raising; through people's transformed and transboundary actions and through practice, people will be aware of their own reality; the social, financial and political reality they are part of, and their possibilities and solutions.

7   The principle of self-determination; the work should be based on the premises of the people and with interesting results for the people and not only for the social worker.

Ronnby sees these principles as a foundation for work with individuals, groups and environment. Because self determination and active participation from those involved is required, work that is not enhancing this would not be regarded as social work based on praxiology.

Conflict theory connected with interactionism – the work process

In the last decade, English literature on social work has seen an increase in text books with titles containing expressions such as: "anti-oppressive practice in social work", "critical social work", "radical social work" or "emancipatory social work". These books will often provide a conflict theory analysis of the contexts of problems, an empowerment approach as described here, and a focus on connecting work at an individual and society level. With a conflict theory analysis and reasoning for action, an understanding linked to other theoretical roots can be found as well. Especially for a linkage of conflict theory and interactionism theory (for example Ward & Mullender 1991, Fook 1993, Braye & Preston-Shoot 1995, Pease & Fook 1999). Also in Norwegian literature there can be found such linkages of conflict theory and interactionism. Hutchinson (2003) has such an approach as a starting point for the work process from individual to collective work. Her approach is based on conflict- and interactionism theory. She describes a way of social work which encompasses individual and society levels:

• *Establishment of contact at an individual level and analysis of the connections of problems.*

Hutchinson discusses community work within social work. Because most social workers are employed in institutions where working at an individual level is the main method, the work process is described both from encounters with individuals and community work. In the first encounter the importance of the involved not being devalued or violated is underlined. Being able to see and understand the power of the institution and social worker is seen as a necessary requirement for not contributing to the violation. Further on, Hutchinson discusses how to bring a critical analysis of structural conditions, own role, language and routines, into the establishment of contact.

Analysing the linkage of the problems together with those involved, based on their understanding, is highlighted. The social worker should not overwhelm the involved with their analysis, but should contribute in the exploration, but not act as an "empty box".

• *Making room for work*

How to create room for work with groups that may work with changes at a system – or society level is also described, based on the realization that work at a collective level is not common in institutions where social workers are employed. This is seen as a means of preventing social problems.

The mandate given to social workers by the political system concerns both the remedy for social problems and preventive work. If problems at individual and family levels are seen as connected with the system and society, then the institutions will have to direct their preventive work towards a macro level as well.

• *The establishment of, and working with, groups*

Work with groups has a long tradition in social work. In a conflict theory's understanding of contexts, most individual problems are deprivatised, meaning they are linked to contexts outside of the individual. So, it affects more than one person. Dialogue is central in this approach. Through dialogue the life situation is named and linked to structural social relations. Groups are therefore an important part of the exploration and analyses. Through dialogue and interaction, the goal is to mobilize power.

Sometimes this form of work that the social worker is a part of finishes here. Other times the group can decide to continue and work for changes. If the mandate makes it possible and the group wants it, the social worker can continue his or her cooperation with the purpose of preventing social problems. This can be working with groups in changing problematic conditions at a macro level. In community work, participation and cooperation with those involved is a prerequisite.

• *Changes to a system and society level*

Often groups trying to change problematical conditions at a collective level will have as goal documenting problems and how they are connected. If problems are not obvious or the group is of the opinion that the problems are slightly concealed, it will be necessary to have a documentation of these conditions to make them visible and bring attention to what needs to be changed.

Sometimes the work stops here, while at other times the goal can be to bring change within institutions and organizations, to establish new actions and influence, or to bring change to the larger society, as for example work with alterations to the law.

Even though client participation has long been a part of the mandate for all institutions, the practice is not well developed. With the approach presented here, an essential premise is that the social worker works 'together with' those involved, not 'with' the involved.

The fact that community work is less used than individual work in most workplaces and that critical analysis can result in new ways of seeing problem linkages, can bring about problems. With this approach, problems are seen as entailing possibilities for growth. Handling these conflicts is important so that they do not become deadlocked.

- *Finalising the work process*

Written evaluation is emphasized in the work process where community work has been used. This is to communicate with all parties concerned. Many will have been involved in the work. A written document makes clear what has been accomplished and is helpful in sharing experiences with others. It is underlined that the voices of the involved must be clear in the evaluation, so they do not become objects. Critical use of expressions is emphasised.

Community work in social work

From the beginning of the 1970s, community work as a method in social work has been taught at educational institutions in Norway. The method can be said to be a collective term for preventive social work where it is a prerequisite that those involved are participating in the formulation of the objectives for the work and are active in the progress. Even though we will claim that conflict theory brought community work into social work in Norway, it is not so that other theories cannot or are not being linked to community work.

Community work with roots in conflict theory assumes that social problems are related to structures in society that serve the interest of the ones in power. Social

problems as they appear at an individual or group level are seen to have direct or indirect connection with oppressive structures. It is further assumed that also the social institutions can function in an oppressive way. The effect of the social services on class and groups in society is in focus. The pedagogical process in community work is marked by consciousness rasing and work directed at concrete goals linked to redistribution and organizational changes. The involved residents or groups are required to participate in both the defining of goals and their formulation (Bryant 1972, Ronnby 1977, Ife 1997, Hutchinson 2003).

The social worker should not overwhelm those involved with such an analysis. He or she should rather introduce the analysis and contribute to its exploration. It is the involved themselves who should make a stand and come to their own decisions. Community work in social work is about cooperating with those involved to achieve changes at a system and society level which can prevent and repair social problems. This can be documenting conditions that are not seen, but which are causing difficulties for groups. It can be working towards change in practice in one's own institution, or other institutions and organisations. It can be to work to bring about new actions and changes in local and greater communities.

"And Yet We Are Human" – Revealing attitudes and transboundary practice

Radical social work, with a conflict theory practice, assumes that there exist opposites of interests in society. Problems of individuals and groups are seen as related to their positions of powerlessness. In this approach, expressions such as "resource weak groups" or other expressions based on characteristics will not be used – rather, expressions such as "underprivileged". This is linked to an understanding where one sees individuals and groups as caught in positions of powerlessness, and passivity as a result of not recognising possibilities for control of their own life. In addition to actually being outcast by society, norms and attitudes are also developed, which are meant to keep the individual down.

We will here use an excerpt from Finn Carling's autobiography: "And Yet We Are Human" (158, translation1962: 55–58, Chatto and Windus Ltd, London) to reflect on how his personal experiences can be understood in the light of a conflict theory. Questions that can be asked from this starting point are as follows: How

are devaluating attitudes towards groups finding their way into structures in society situations and in practice? How are these attitudes expressed in norms? How to show that the values expressed are not necessarily in agreement with how people experience the situation? What does it involve to move into 'the unfinished'?

Carling exposes a critical attitude towards what most people see as common.

Excerpt from "And Yet We Are Human" (Carling 1958)

> I also learnt that the cripple must be careful not to act differently from what people expect him to do. Above all they expect the cripple to be crippled; to be disabled and helpless; to be inferior to themselves, and they will become easily suspicious and insecure if the cripple falls short of these expectations. It is rather strange, but the cripple has to play the part of a cripple – just as many women have to be what the men expect them to be: just women; and the Negroes often have to act like clowns in front of the 'superior' white race, so that the white man shall not be frightened of his black brother.

> I once knew a dwarf who was a very pathetic example of this, indeed. She was very small, about four feet tall, and she was extremely well educated. In front of people, however, she was very careful not to be anything other than "the dwarf", and she played the part of the fool with the same mocking laughter and the same quick, funny movements that have been the characteristics of fools ever since the royal courts of the Middle Ages. Only when she was among friends, she could throw away her cap and bells and dare to be the women she really was: intelligent, sad and very lonely.

> But, people do not only expect you to play your part; they also expect you to know your place. I remember for instance a man in an open-air restaurant in Oslo. He was much disabled and he had left his wheel chair to ascend a rather steep staircase up to the terrace where the tables were. Because he could not use his legs he had to crawl on his knees, and as he began to ascend the stairs in this unconventional way, the waiters rushed to meet him, not to help, but to tell him that they could not serve a man like him at that restaurant, as people visited it to enjoy themselves, not to be depressed by the sight of cripples.

From the time I was seven till nine, I was taken to a small school – one of the very few private ones left in Norway – which followed the principles of Rudolf Steiner. There I learned to read and write as well as my spastic movements permitted, and got my first glimpse into the imaginative world which is the special quality of this type of school. Still more important, however, was that I, at that small school of only twelve pupils met the children of the neighbourhood; the boys and girls who were to be my friends in the years to come.

When I was about fifteen years of age, I – or rather my parents – began to consider my further education. I then started to get serious tuition at home, and after five years I matriculated and was admitted to the University of Oslo.

I do not know how my parents thought that I should be able to earn my living, but I know that I, in my youth, feared the day when I would have to go out and find a job. I knew very well, that the cripple is handicapped, not only because of the limitation set by his physical disability, but also because many people are afraid of employing disabled persons. I knew that many employers thought that cripples missed work more than others, and that they were afraid that their sympathy would be aroused by the handicapped employees and that they therefore would demand less, have to give special considerations and not be able to fire them when they should. I had heard of employers, who felt that the customers would object to a place that 'looked like a charity organization', and I remember that I secretly read the advertising columns in the papers, tears almost coming into my eyes when I realized that I could not have taken even the simplest job offered.

It was not only the thought of how to make a living, however, that occupied my mind in my youth. I also thought of another important side of the life of the adult: Marriage. Whether it was apparent stability of the institution of marriage that tempted me, I could not say; I just know that I thought more of marriage than of love, at least during some periods, and that I was extremely excited when I heard about marriages between cripples and normal people, although I tried to conceal my excitement.

What I heard, however, did not at all encourage me, as it usually reflected the ideas people had about these marriages. I heard about the 'nice and handsome' gentleman who had just married 'that lame girl', and 'What on earth do you think made a pretty girl like her throw her life away by marrying that man in the wheel-chair?' 'Well', the reply would be, 'she has always been the sacrificing kind, you know!' It did not occur to them that marrying a cripple could be anything than a sacrifice. That those who marry the disabled consequently get the worst of it is a feeling so deeply rooted in the mind of people that they nearly always find it a little queer when a healthy young man or woman marries a cripple. Not that they directly disapprove of it – that is, if it happens outside the family – they just do not realize that it can be like a 'real' marriage. I have a feeling that it is just because of mere luck that I still have not heard the following variation upon a rather well-known theme: Do you want your daughter to marry a cripple?

I did not actually hear that remark, I told you, but the attitude behind it was revealed in the eyes of almost every parent of the girl friends I made in my teens. Even the teen-agers themselves showed this attitude, and the girl who wanted to be with a crippled boy did not only have to stand up against the pressure from her parents, but also that of the group."

Discussion of the text in light of conflict theory

In this text Carling reveals how expectations are part of keeping "inferior" groups in society in "their place". He brings forth how valuations and devaluations are interwoven in society institutions, and are integrated into their routines, practice and cultures. Also, he presents the reader with attitudes which imply that "the cripple", as he calls it, should be pitied and one should be kind to "such people". If they try to rise above their place however, for example in a restaurant, in the work force or in the marriage arena, and act together with "the superior" in a natural way, problems may occur. There is in situations like this, when borders are challenged, that the place of a group, and the norms described to it, is revealed. Even though some years have passed since Carling wrote his autobiography, most people with disabilities would be able to recognise themselves. The issues can have changed, opinions about what is acceptable or not, as well, but discrimination in various institutions and attitudes maintaining the established, are still hindrances today. It's about knowing your place. When borders are

challenged it is discouraged. That was also the conclusion from a large public report in 2001, about disabled people's situation in society (NOU 2001: 22). This report came to the conclusion that it is legitimate to ask if disabled people have full private and political rights in Norwegian society. Such an analysis focuses on a structural – and a value- oriented discrimination, which causes difficulties.

Carling tells the reader how his parents chose one of the few private schools for his primary education; the Rudolf Steiner School. He describes the school as a school with few students, which is based on Rudolf Steiner's guidelines. In this philosophy emphasis is placed on seeing each child as unique. The curriculum is based on this principle. Also in our public unitary school system, each individual pupil is highly valued. However, no one is in doubt of what is the norm, the usual practice, who becomes an outsider and who is "integrated". This presents a challenge to the social democracy's normalization ideology, where often there is little room for individual aberrations. This shows a need for normalization thinking which embraces individual variations and where devaluations, which are deeply seated in an old society institution such as the school system, are dealt with. Integration is not enough. It is also necessary to look critically at basic, daily routines, attitudes, language, teaching programmes, evaluations and values. Carling's parents chose the Steiner School. This can be interpreted as a deliberate choice away from a devaluating unitary school, which they assumed would not be able to avoid devaluing their son with his handicap.

Carling shows how values and equal rights have significance for important relations such as love relation ships between people and marriages. He reveals the double standard in "We are all equally worthy" when it comes down to who can get married. He lets us know how he as a young man explored the attitudes of marriages between a person with a disability and one without. Again and again he came to the conclusion that marriage was not to be expected if the able person were not the self- sacrificing type. Also here, in these intimate relations, Carling reveals how people are of different value, even though few would say so.

Carling describes his own thoughts about the labour market and says that he is not sure of his parents' thoughts. But he shows how his parents motivated him to do something that was not common for a youth with a disability to attempt at the time. They organized for him to sit for the secondary high school exam and later

enter university. We can easily imagine transboundary actions and a move towards directions with unknown results, and also how his parents handled the "unfinished"; that which is not standardised, that which challenges and opens up, but where there are no answers given. It is this alternative Thomas Mathisen (1971: 9) describes as "the unfinished":

It is my belief that the alternative is in the unfinished, in the draft, in what not yet exists. The "finished alternative" is "finished" in a twofold sense.

We can see a dialectical aspect linked to these transboundary actions described by Carling, by not allowing common limitations to rule, but challenge and explore the existing.

And it is the critical approach towards the existing; the revelation of the devaluations, the challenges and liberation that are the central aspects of conflict theory in social work. Society never becomes invisible in the individual's life with this approach. The excerpt from Carling's autobiography illustrates these essential aspects of conflict theories. The excerpt also reveals how individuals and groups who are devalued by the social democratic normalization ideology, struggle with the double standards of the signals and messages they receive. The overall signal is that we are all the same, we have all the same value, we are all equal. Individual and groups experiencing that this is not the truth in his or her daily life, will have to edit their own experiences in a critical light and then use untraditional methods to be able to make visible an alternative reality in the public sphere. In conflict theory it is emphasized that such a therapy ought to be done together with people in similar situations to strengthen each other in the exploration and in the work of making visible realities, which are questioning our foundation of equality. Liberation from powerlessness, self-reproach and desperation through experiencing mixed messages, attitudes and devaluations. Liberation of power to search for new understanding and possibilities are central in radical social work.

Criticism of conflict theory in social work

The main critique has been directed at the explicit political ideology behind the theory, knowledge and action. However, the parties within this tradition have always been open about their ideological grounding and they claim that all social work has an ideological foundation, even though it is not expressed in all models.

Sometimes, the critique has been that the work is not connected with the needs of today's clients, independent of being "constructed" in interaction with society and devaluing structures. The focus on creating a collective consciousness in the clients has been at the expense of attending to clients immediate needs, which has been the objective of the social institutions. The criticism has been raised that the social worker in this tradition has not taken on the mandate given to them; to prevent and help individuals and groups who live in difficult circumstances to be able to manage day-to-day problems. Instead of focusing on these problems social workers have focused on changing the system.

It has also been argued that these models easily can become paternalistic; one "knows" on behalf of the oppressed group. If the work does not include participation from those involved, it can appear as domination and "conquering", even though a conflict analysis is the foundation for the action. Some will also refer to experiences from East-Europe, where a collective term as a starting point is no guaranty against individual oppressions. The individual can also disappear in a collective approach.

Summary

Central characteristics of conflict theory in social work

• Main reasons for problems at an individual and group level are to be found at a system and society level

• Society sets limitations and provides possibilities for individuals, groups and classes

• Power and powerlessness are central to the understanding of social problems

• Society is marked by differences in the balance of power

• It is presupposed that those with power will aim at keeping their privileges and developing a culture, which protects their interests.

• People experiencing devaluation and who are placed in marginal positions can react with powerlessness, despair, passivity, drug abuse or can develop behavior destructive to themselves or to those closest to them

- Theory and practice must be connected so that the individual does not become alienated from them self, their environment, or their relation to other people

- Conflicts are seen as an incentive to development as long as they do not become deadlocked

Action model and the relation of social worker – client

- Consciousness raising leads to the mobilization of inner strengths where their own life is linked to collective relations

- Dialogue and cooperation with others in similar situations are central to this process

- Through dialogue accompanied by analysis and action, the social worker will help those involved to believe in themselves and their own strengths and develop power to be able to change conditions in society

- Liberation from powerlessness and devaluating attitudes and structures is central in this work

- It is worked "together with" and not "with" those involved.

- "The unfinished" is central to the work because of real client participation and because of society construction based on critical analysis of the norm

- The social worker will often use their mandate to its full extent, i.e. work to prevent social problems at a macro level

- Often the work will extend from the individual to groups and further on to community work

Value orientation

- The understanding of the relationship between humans and society is based on a structural deterministic view of people, but is influenced by humanistic perspectives, as well

- A person is seen as both a victim of and a creator of society

- A person should strive to become a subject in their own life

Criticism

- The analysis is strong, but there is too little development of action models

- Not enough focus on daily life needs and too much focus on changing structures

- Too idealistic because of taking a stand

Chapter 6: Systems Theories in Social Work

Introduction

The origin of the systems theory depends on what type of glasses we put on. In sociology we can choose to start with Durkheim as we have done, or with Parsons. In family work one can start with the cybernetics after the Second World War, then the move towards general systems theory, before emphasizing Bateson's work on communication theory in the 1950's. If network theory is the starting point, one could start with Barnes who developed this concept, or focus more on Bronfenbrenner (1979) who developed systems oriented network thinking. Within the area of social work we can link Pincus and Minahan (1973) to the beginning of systems theory. Their holistic approach adjusted the systems theory to the area of social work.

The way in which knowledge developed within one institutional context is used within another one is in itself important to reflect upon as shown in a project about professional development within social welfare offices (Haaland, Njå and Montgomery 1999). Here, a way of including something from another model into your own model is introduced when knowledge from the field of family therapy is used to develop methods for family work in the first line of welfare services. "The model does not indicate that we should repossess or assimilate something into it, it is more about looking at it, evaluating if there is something there that could be useful- experiencing what is outside one's own field – Maybe the experience itself is the most important?" (ibid: 33[5]).

The general starting point for the various schools within systems theory is to be found in Darwin's way of thinking about "survival of the fittest" which later has been connected, developed and adjusted to analysis of humans and society. So, systems theory was actually first developed and adjusted in connection with biological phenomenon and then later on became connected to analysis of phenomenon within social sciences. This is a perspective focusing on the relations between people rather than focusing on characteristics or qualities. It is also a focus on the environment that people create between themselves. It is seen as

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[5]   *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

important that all things are connected and that one part cannot be altered without consequences for the other parts.

Systems theory can be found in different fields such as psychology, political science, social work, sociology, physics and biology. Concepts such as general systems theory, cybernetics, information theory, family therapy, communication theory, network theory, ecological theory, functionalism and constructivism are all perspectives that can be related to systems theory. Our aim has been to point out those parts of systems theory which we think are useful for social workers to know about. The origin and development of theoretical schools of thoughts within systems theory have been linked to the field of sociology. When we approach the area of social work we will start with holistic oriented work and models of system-theoretical problem solving, and then go more in depth into work with families and social network.

Six characteristics within Systems Theory

There are six essential characteristics that can be recognized among the various schools within systems theory. The first is the ambition to develop holistic theories. The second is about our understanding of how systems are built up and defined. The third is about the importance of boundaries when dividing the system and its surroundings. Fourth, the systems are sustained because of a constant movement through processes of social change and equilibrium. The fifth is about circular causality thinking and the last characteristic is the possibility of identifying goals that one tries to achieve within a system. Identifying the goal with the system is essential in understanding why a system is being sustained and not dissolved or fragmented into other systems or becoming a part of the environment.

Holistic thinking and the wish to develop a holistic theory, which can capture most of the diversity in human life, are central in systems theory. This can also be seen in the actual definition of a system. The word system is Greek and means a set of connected things. It is a group of smaller units that creates a cooperative unity. This unity differs from the sum of each separate unit. We can exemplify this by saying that the way it "differs", means that it can be both "more" and "less" than the sum of the single unit. When collaboration in a colloquium makes those involved write a better assignment than if they write the parts individually, then

the whole is "more than" the sum of the parts. However, when the result of the collaboration is worse then what they could have performed individually, then we can say that the whole is "less than" the sum of the parts. This dynamic understanding and definition of a system is central in social systems, where people are the parts in the system.

It is the man-made systems which are in focus in this book. Each *system* creates its own surrounding, which is about how one views the world outside one's own system from the inside. It is also possible to view systems from the outside and describe a system as divided into smaller sub-systems. In the family system for example, the parents constitute a partial system and the children another sub-system. Within the sub-system we can talk about elements, which in this example would be the other members in the family. A personal quality is a characteristic feature of an element. The environment around a family can be called a supra-system. So, a system is a relation where the various parts influence each other respectively. The relations we have with each other decide what sort of systems we are part of. The adults in the family can be the husband and wife system as well as the parent system, even though it is the same people participating in the two different systems.

Boundaries are important to be able to differentiate something as a system. These boundaries can be identified by the fact that more interaction is happening within the system's boundaries than between elements on different sides of the system's boundaries. Man-made systems are never totally closed. However, it can be useful to view the boundaries, as for example in a family system, as more or less open or closed. If we say that everything is connected or that we are always part of different relations, this will be too vague. All perspectives in this book are about relations. So the way we focus on relationships and how we segregate them, is crucial within the different perspectives. In conflict theory it was power, interests and status in society which made the different groupings. In this chapter, system is the central term and a system needs boundaries.

Equilibrium- and change processes are crucial in system thinking.

A system is never completely static. If we are thinking of the human being as a biological system then we will die the day we stop breathing. A thermostat in an

oven is often used to illustrate how this "ongoing capacity" operates. The thermostat is constructed in such a way that it registers deviations from a set norm. If the room is getting too cold or too hot, then the thermostat sends a signal to the heat elements so they either "hurry up" or "slow down", depending on what is necessary to get back to the set norm. In the family we can say it is necessary to develop a state of equilibrium where the different family members receive signals about "how we do things in our family", what is "our norm". When the different family members obtain different roles, a shared understanding of the distribution of power and influences among the family members is developed. If we cannot identify norms ascribed to a 'state of equilibrium' in a system, we will have difficulties in describing this system. It is possible that we do not always manage to identify these "family rules", but that is not to say they do not exist.

Human systems have a complicated and problematic relationship to change:

We all have contradictory feelings about change. We ask others for advice without utilizing the knowledge we already have, and thereafter avoid following the advice we asked for, even though we paid for it. We do not do this because we are neurotic or cowardly, but because the will for change and the wish for maintaining the state of things exist side by side for good reasons. Both are important for our emotional well being and deserve the same amount of attention and respect (Goldhorn Lerner 1993: 21[6]).

In systems theory one studies the feedback that a system is giving itself when there is an attempt to change the balance in a system. Negative feedback[7] is what we call it when the information coming into the system serves in maintaining the system. This is what we call homeostasis, a maintaining of balance within certain boundaries. In other words, the "conservative" aspect of a system is manifesting itself. The other form of feedback in a system is called positive feedback. The system is changing and new norms, rules and self-identity are being developed.

[6] *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

[7] *Negative feedback is when the system receives messages about deviations of the equilibrium and this feed back mechanism is used to reduce the aberrations from the state of equilibrium. Positive feedback is to increase rather than minimise aberrations.*

We can say that we have reached a new state of equilibrium in the system, which is so different from the previous one that it is possible to say that the system, for example the family, has changed.

Feedback on the state of equilibrium and the changes in a system can be described in more technical terms as feedback loops. The adaptation and the process that is happening within the system is called "throughput", and after something has entered the system – "input". What the system is sending out, a communication action, is called "output". The feedback to the system can either maintain "old equilibrium", or we can receive positive feedback leading towards a "new state of equilibrium". These feedback loops should be seen as a spiral process and not only as a closed circle.

Schematically this can shown as followed:

Figure 5 Feedback loops in a system
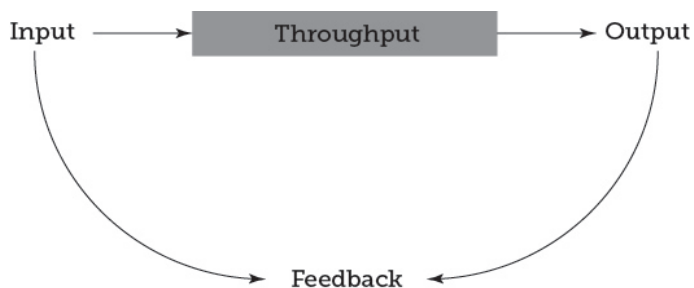
Systems theory can also be recognized by a circular 'cause and effect' way of thinking. This stands as an alternative to a causal explanation or linear cause-effect thinking. The diversity in a situation is brought out and one emphasizes that an occurrence can have many reasons, instead of just one single reason.

When we choose different viewpoints or "punctuations", we attain different understanding of what is happening. In family therapy one can focus on something as "the first occurrence" by freezing the course of events at one place in the process. This is done so to get started with the analysis (Hansen 1992). Often it is the family themselves who present the starting point by answering questions about when a problem occurred for example.

In systems theory it is also stressed that the systems have a goal-oriented behaviour. From another angle goals can be defined as what functions, consequences, effects or influences an action has on this social entity. The word function is borrowed from mathematics and biology. Functionalism within the social sciences emphasizes the need to present an alternative to a historical understanding (Østberg 1977: 87). A minimum goal for a system is to maintain itself and find a goal, a meaning and a place for its existence. It can have as a goal to form a part of a bigger context, for example a client / social worker system can have as a goal to implement and carry out parts of Norwegian social welfare politics and social welfare legislations. The goal for an organism is to maintain life. In a social system goal oriented behaviour is governed by creating or maintaining meaning.

An event from the social welfare office seen from a systems theory point of view

Below is an example of role conflict between social worker and client within a social welfare office system. One way to exemplify systems theory is to show that our roles are roles in a system. To understand how society and the context influence us is important to understand how this makes the interaction in a society more complex. Still, the complexity within a system is less than in the society outside of a system. Client and social worker have different social roles within a social security office for example. We can link this to systems theory because the term social role is defined as a set of norms for how to attend the tasks belonging to a social position. (Martinussen 1988: 109). We are here interested in role conflicts. A role conflict is about crossing expectations within a person's role-set. A role-set is defined as a sum of expectations sent to the proprietor of a position. The position is seen as different to the individual who can inhabit it, an assembly of rights and duties. A role is the dynamic aspect of the position. When the individual performs the rights and duties that constitute the position, a role is carried out. In the example presented here, we have the positions social worker and client in a social security office. Both the client and the social worker hold other positions as well, such as: parent, neighbour, politician etc.

When we use the terms rights and duties below, this in a sociological context and not in the legal meaning of the word. At times these two can coincide. In some municipalities it is being said that one has so many law orders that one has to

prioritize between which laws one is going to break. In sociological terms this says that one conceives some laws as stronger duties than other statutory provisions. Rights and duties are connected. When one views something as a right one will at the same time conceive that everyone is obliged to fulfill all these rights. Yet there is a difference here, because if no one demands their rights but only experience it inside themselves, then there is nobody who needs to face the duty of fulfilling these rights.

In the example below, from a social welfare office, we will show how a single mum with two children presents with a social problem such as financial difficulties. She is a student and does not have a car or a washing machine. She takes her three- and five year olds with her in a taxi to wash their clothes. This is becoming expensive. But for her it is more expensive as a lump sum to buy a washing machine.

Based on the client's situation, the social worker describes what is the general financial situation and what the hardest part working as a social worker is:

What is starting to get difficult is the budget. The clients are coming with bigger and bigger problems. Support persons are cut back. We have 1.5 months left of the support persons budget, and that's it. I become fatigued. Fatigued over the fact that I have to fight for a washing machine. We have to respect that there is a budget. But it has become more difficult the last years. We're saying no, when it's in my opinion unreasonable.

The social worker concretises this with another statement linked to this situation.

So, we have a battle about a washing machine and a mother who's wearing herself out. Because it is a battle. And they shift it onto me saying: "You can try?" I understand, I wouldn't have managed it either. I say: "It's not me that make decisions. A washing machine is not a matter of course. There is no guarantee that I can get it through." Sometimes I say: "You have to stop it now – I have my rules to follow – I'm not the big, bad wolf." I'm using much energy today – because I think they should get it. 'Budget', it says in the refusal. Sometimes the clients are asking for too much, and then it's ok to say no.

Schematically we can draw up "the washing machine case" as following:

Roles / the role set linked to the position social worker	Rights – what is perceived as one's own inner demands	Duties – what is experienced as external demands	Role conflicts – what is perceived as loyalty conflicts.
employee and subordinate	to use one's discretion	to keep the budget	one should continue to adapt to the system, one has other clients as well
as an integrated professional	demand respect for experience, discretion and competency	to act upon changed framework conditions	one's own professional development will suffer and weaken if one adapt
as a fellow human being	to be spared of unrighteous scolding for criticism of the system and not towards the executants	to be honest and let the client get to know where you're at and what you feel	one must expect critique of the system, but at the same time stand up for working there

If we take as a starting point the social worker's position, then the roles as integrated professional and fellow human being indicates that one should react. At least submit a protest, to make it clear that this case is something special. The social worker should make it clear that this is not a habit or something they often do in cases like this. If the special circumstances in this case are made clear, one reduces the loyalty conflict as in also being an employee. The social worker will also appear as loyal with other clients because it is made clear that if the situation is special, there will be a reaction. From this way of thinking it could even be argued that reacting in specific cases is part of legitimating the social welfare office as a support system, as the lowest security net. Even though this social worker has decided to react, the problem can seem to be without any alternatives for action. In which forum and in what form shall the protest take place? One way to do this is that the social worker stands behind his or her assessment and conclusions and presents them for the panel that is to hear the case. In that way it is not only the head's conclusion that is presented for the decisive authority.

In the figure below we have described in the same way as for the social worker, the set of roles/role set that is tied to the position as client. The reflections of the client as a mother and an independent human being, indicates that she should use all the means possible to her. It seems reasonable then that she tries to appear strategic, but without revealing that this is strategic. As for example the fact that she is taking a taxi, not a bus and not washing while at school or in the lunch break, can force an action. Her taxi expenses can make it illogical from a financial point of view to pay for these rather than paying a lump sum for a washing machine. When the social welfare office is not concerned about her, she has to do something about this herself.

Roles and role set linked to the position; client	Rights – what one perceives as one's own inner demands	Duties – what one perceives as external demands	Role conflicts – what one perceives as loyalty conflicts
client at a social security office	to get one's situation assessed as unique	to focus on the central point in the situation that is relevant for the case	should the client behave strategically or have confidence in her interests being promoted
as a mother	to provide the children with similar possibilities as other children	to make sure of minimum care for the children	be allowed to judge for oneself what is best for the children, or have to use the norms of the social security system
as an independent human being	to judge what is the best solution for oneself and have the right to ask for help	to be up and around and have a zest of life, be self-reliant	is she just a 'case' for the social security office, and is she alone in taking responsibility for herself?

An aim with the work at the social security office is that the totality of each role-set in the client- social worker system ought to have a function or a goal. The question to ask from a systems theory point of view is: Who is the work functional for? It can be that a part of the dysfunction in not giving the client the washing machine is latent and hidden for the social security office. The social problems it creates for herself and the children may never become so visible that the social welfare machinery will have to relate to it. In that way it can be functional for the

social welfare office to force the client financially, but it becomes non-functional in total if she breaks down and they have to take custody of the children. It becomes non-functional financially as well.

The role conflict she experiences as a client is not functional, because the decision made is in her opinion so unreasonable that she does not understand, not in comparison with others either, that this is the best help to be self reliant. The contact with the social office is for the client a confirmation that she is not adequate, her definition of the problem is not recognised as an official problem.

From the social worker's point of view she is experiencing loyalty conflicts. The way it stands it can be a dysfunctional conflict seen from the system's point of view, because they do not show her respect as an experienced social worker and they could risk that she will resign and they will have to use resources to employ and educate a new employee. From another perspective it can be functional for the system to question her professional assessments. This can lead to the social worker putting her own assessment aside, and to survive in the system, just follow the directives from above. The social worker can then stress her role as a subordinate employee. The client will suffer a loss in this case, it will be dysfunctional for the client.

We can look at the interaction that happens within the system between the client and the social worker as a total evaluation of the duties and rights they are fronted with. Sometimes, specific roles in the role set become very clear and can be important for the decision-making. For the client the extra burden it is for her to travel to and from the laundry with two small children is seen as significant. The role as an "independent human being" and being able to take care of you becomes essential for the client. For the social worker the respect for herself as an "integrated professional" becomes decisive for her/his choice. Maybe this case is the tip of the iceberg of many unreasonable cutbacks, as the example about support persons. So, maybe she reacts more towards other systems, for example a political committee, as in this case.

If the social worker had not reacted, the management could have seen this as she/he had accepted the external definition of the situation, and that it is a functional decision. Maybe it is tacit understanding that the client is someone

demanding too much, and therefore a refusal is ok. So, here we have seen role conflicts because there are crossing expectations between role sets linked to the same position. When analyzing a client-social worker relation based on role theory, it is made clear that one is a participant in various systems with different norms.

Origins and development

Functionalism

The starting point for functionalism is that society is a social system that consists of a range of mutual coherent parts, which is in a state of equilibrium. Change in one part will lead to change in another part, so the overall changes are seen as something happening in line with a superior social order. Social change is seen as something that is happening gradually rather than in big dramatic leaps. The latter can be found in conflict theory, where one see the differences between special interest groups in society becoming bigger so that in the end they culminate in a conflict situation. Functionalism has a more harmonious view of society's development. There is a tendency to think that the best form of society or system formulation survive, because here one has found the best adaptability towards the challenges one is confronted with in society. In functionalism one is less concerned about society being formed in agreement with the ruling classes' interests as expressed in conflict theoretical terminology. The functionalists would rather argue that all classes will be best served by a stable society that has peace and order and where the different groups in society have distributed the tasks to build society between them. To avoid ending up with a chaotic society it is important that we obtain a structure of superior and subordinate order within the society they would say.

Durkheim

Sociology differentiates a structure- or system explanation from an action explanation. The latter refers to the individual and interprets society based on the individual's actions. The structural explanations often see society or parts of society as social systems. These systems were often compared with biological systems. In sociology the systems theory is a part of functionalism with roots back to one of the central classics, Emile Durkheim (1858–1917). For Durkheim society was an integrated structure and an 'objective' reality. What interested him was

this unifying and holistic characteristic of society. In Durkheim's view a person is a product of the "social melting pot". In this way a person's social side becomes nearly identical with society. Our social characteristics are best understood by studying society, not by studying subjects and the specific individual (Moe 1994: 67). Durkheim studied social integration for example by studying the function of religion in society. Through statistic material about suicide he found that catholic countries had stronger social integration than protestant countries, and the suicide rate was lower in the catholic countries.

Parsons

The American sociologist Parsons (1902–1979) tried to combine Weber's individualism and Durkheim's collectivism in his action theory linked to social systems (Østberg 1988: 16). Parsons put forward an evolution optimism; that the best society will survive. This is in line with Darwin's philosophy "survival of the fittest". The individual becomes in Parson's view an actor in society by integrating -internalize- expectations, norms and values from the environment surrounding them. These value orientations leave traces or are expressed in social roles or role expectations, which are integrated into social systems and subsystems. Parsons was interested in developing a holistic action theory which could describe the relationship between the individual and society. He emphasized the structural in his underlining of action processes being sanctioned by the social environment. We will get the most important information about how a person and society are being formed by starting with the big picture and various systems, rather than how individual actors understand and interpret the world and different situations they encounter.

Luhmann

Luhmann, a sociologist, studied under Parsons for a while. He is also a jurist, and has worked for a long period in the official bureaucracy. Luhman is today the sociologist that is first and foremost linked to systems theory. "Systems theory is an especially interesting super theory", says Luhmann (1993: 4). A super theory which is going to express something universal, as is the ambition of systems theory, must include both oneself and one's opponents. Luhmann claims that no theory is as complex as the real world. The essence of a theory is to help us find words and notions so we can comprehend and be able to talk about what is

happening around us. Theory development is then confronted with at least two pitfalls. One is making the theory so complex that we are not able to understand it in itself and thereby not manage the next and most important point – to use it for analyzing the social reality. The second pitfall is to make the theory so easy that while we have few problems understanding it, it leads to an understanding of the world so roughly sorted and categorized that it is of little use or meaning since we all exist in a world that is quite complex. The theory can become so simplified that it becomes uninteresting and functions more as a justification of putting something that we call theory onto the description of social reality. In such a situation it can be as helpful and informative to get a clear presentation of a situation without having any ambitions of theorizing over it. However, we have already theorized over it without expressing it explicitly– because theorizing is about organizing relationships between elements in reality, based on a certain order and systematics. Why am I writing here about theories and the use of theory? – Because the presentation of systems theory has been criticized for being both too technical and too complicated and on the other side being too simple and not complex enough. Systems theory is particularly confronted with the challenge of developing a "moderate complex" theory.

What Luhmann describes as the paradigm shift in systems theory is a development from the earlier causal thinking about how systems and their environments influenced each other, to what he calls the theory about "self referential systems". This shift between what is also called the old systems theory and newer systems theory will be discussed further in the following section. Luhmann represents the newer version of systems theory.

Old and new Systems Theory

In old systems theory the orientation is towards hierarchy and structures which contribute to the way in which each single element is acting. This school of thinking is especially influenced from patterns within biology, as for example how the human body is seen as self-regulating. One understands social systems as moving around equilibrium, so that there exists mechanisms which are responsible for maintaining society's equilibrium when changes in the environment around the system occur. This is called homeostatic systems models, and has cybernetic as a starting point, which is about regulations and control. Within this theory one emphasizes that systems are receiving negative feedback,

that is to say that the way society is today, it is functional. One has reached the best adaptation. We can say that this systems theory is also carrying a "conservative" message. What is good for the system or society as a whole is also good for the individual.

Within newer systems theory one emphasizes how each single system creates its own structure, and there is a focus on language and narration. This "new school" within systems theory is often called "second order cybernetic", where it is essential that the person observing must be included in whatever is the focus for observation. One emphasizes that "the world as a variety of systems, is created through the eyes of the one observing". In the word construct we get a hint that there is not only one "true" opinion of how reality is to be understood, but that it is us as human beings that construct reality. This way of thinking, compared to the earlier is to a greater extent linked to how systems change through positive feedback. While in previous thinking one saw the systems as open and driven from their outer surroundings, the systems are now seen as more closed. A new innovation in the system occurs, which is not only a consequence of external influence. From early to later systems theory the focus has changed from structure to cognition.

In the figure below we will show the difference between older and newer systems theory, by using as an example a family and each member's place in the family. In the older version one emphasized that systems are localized within other systems (Ramsøy 1962). If we use the family as an example, then the family encompasses the subsystems in the family. Seen in the perspective of newer systems theory a family member can be localized both within and outside the family system.

Figure 6: Two Forms for System Thinking
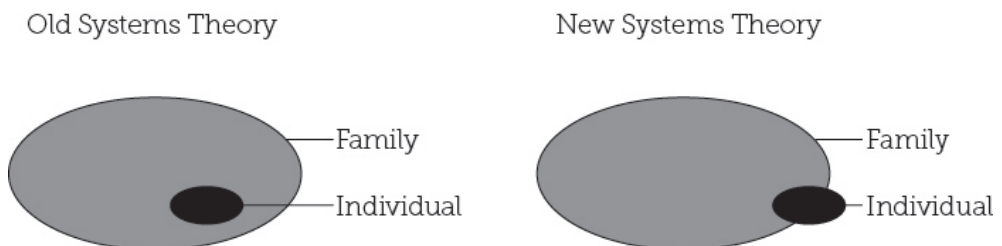
When we have mutual conceptions of the norms in society and they have a unifying character, as we can say of Norway in the period after the Second World War, then the "commando lines" in society become readily understood. It is a common understanding of how "we are all in the same boat" and agree on the course we have started on. This way of thinking can be found in modernism, which is characterized by a belief that the world is moving forward and that we can solve the problems we meet by the help of reasoning and rational problem solving. The period of building up the Norwegian welfare state after the Second World War is an example of such a modernistic project. The systems theory that Parsons represents fits this understanding of society. To describe this early systems theory we can use the metaphor of an "onion" – where one layer is outside another layer. The parents in the family hold the commando lines and the accounts of which rights and duties are expected from the children in the family. One problem with this early version of functionalism was the minimal awareness of the core in the system and not a fully developed understanding of how to perceive each individual.

Systems theory has become interested in the relationship between different systems, when the society is more diverse. What we define as post modernism becomes a description of a more diverse society. Society dissolves into many subsystems and it is characterized by the common value consensus diminishing. In this context, knowledge becomes more relative because one emphasizes that people interpret society from their own particular viewpoint. Luhman has developed the systems theory so that it captures more of the social processes we are faced with in today's post modernistic society. Norway today for example has a far less unified and common value consensus than in the heydays of modernism in our country – after the war and in an increasing degree in the first decades after the nations newly won freedom. Still, it can be said that later systems theory also belongs to a functionalistic way of thinking, where the emphasis is on how to understand social order in ways of systems formation.

Consciousness creates psychic systems; the individual

To communicate is essential in life. Yet life is more than we can take part in through communication. People can also refrain from communicating and they can have their own thoughts. Luhmann says that the individual is distributed into

three systems: the biological, the social and the consciousness system. What he achieves with this is to avoid that the individual disappears in the social. By own consciousness-raising the individual can maintain their perception of themselves and the world while entering and participating in different systems. As we could see in Figure 6 this shows how the individual in later systems theory can be both inside and outside the system. The individual's specific structure and identity have entered the arena to a greater extent in later systems theory, in contrast to the earlier, more hierarchical systems theory.

Luhmann uses psychic systems about what most closely connects to an individual and an individual's characteristic. Luhmann (1993: 14) says that a psychic system uses consciousness to reproduce itself and he further states that the psychic system is something we cannot fully encapsulate in words: "Language transfers something social to the psychic complexity. But the consciousness progress can never be identical with a linguistic form"(ibid[8]). The individual is more than what can be captured in the language and in the social systems. In identity development one can refer to oneself as a closed system. Therefore, a psychic system cannot be seen as a subsystem in a social system, because no consciousness can be identical with communication. Luhmann rather defines psychic systems as a part of the social systems' surroundings (Luhmann 1993: 1). Luhmann makes a clear distinction between organisms as biological systems that become integrated systems through life, while social and psychic systems evolve from meaning (Jonhill 1995: 65).

Communication makes social systems

Social systems' self – reference is related to what are characteristic differences between systems and surroundings (Luhmann 1993: preface: 3). One is preoccupied with the systems being self-referential/self reflective and that the participants in the system in dialogue with each other creates the system. Such systems can also appear with a physical boundary in form; rooms and buildings. This can be the class system and the classroom. The family and a house. These external boundaries are still not enough to identify something as a system. People

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[8]   *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English*

can live in the same house without talking together, or be together in the same class without having anything to do with each other.

Within the welfare machinery different forms of systems are constructed to enable communication and problem solving. One method in family therapy is to ask the person or the persons having the problem to invite those people they have talked with about this problem to therapy with them. In this way the systems are made by the problem, or to be accurate; of those who already talk about the problem. This is called "problem-determined system" and Anderson and Goolishian (1986) define this therapy system as a language system: "We define the treatment system as a language system, a system with boundaries marked by a linguistically shared problem. We call these particular language systems "problem-determined systems". In this therapy they try to find a meaning with, or understand the problem. It is the communication between them that sets boundaries to other systems outside the therapy.

The relationship between systems and society

Newer systems theory concerns self-referential systems. Luhmann is "spokesperson for a radical constructivism which states that the world can only be seen via contextual and system specific horizons" (Rasmussen 1996). We are living in a world full of systems. The systems are closed in the way that they are only being considerate towards themselves, and by differentiating between self-refererence and foreigner reference they create a communicative boundary and a difference towards the world. Society consists of an increasing number of such reflexive systems which all see the world in a different way, and to an increasing degree acknowledge this. It is communication that creates systems according to Luhmann and his focus is on the social systems. Luhmann, in contrast to Parson's unifying society, has the diverse society as a starting point. It is only the system itself which can answer how the problem is to be solved. Instead of a unity, the focus is directed towards the relationship between the systems and their surroundings. We get a society that explodes in variety and by this also explodes in complexity. We cannot have a perspective over everything, and thereby each effort to achieve an overview can only be partial. This again leads to multiple contextuality, where our perception of reality depends on our standpoint and the context. Rather then value consensus, we are now talking about pluralism and

multiple perspectives. There exists no superstructure to combine functional differentiated systems. The postmodern society is characterized by the absence of a superior principle, and this becomes a problem that each system has to solve themselves.

Society is not a system, but society is what encompasses systems. The surroundings are always more complex than the system itself. By differentiating systems, the complexity in the surroundings is reduced by increasing the system's own complexity. Each system has its own specific context or surroundings. The surroundings or the society are everything else than the social system. It is the differentiation from the world that defines something as a system. We do not see the society as it is; we have to grasp it by differentiation processes. We will never grasp the big picture in society, because by focusing on something, we are defocusing on something else. The various function systems such as economy, law and politics have their own logic which creates the world in its own picture. The communication between these areas is difficult, yet a challenge for ecological communication, according to Luhmann (1989). In systems theory nowadays one is not so interested in what society is like, but more how we receive knowledge about society. What is important for our system is what contributes to create our context and our organization of knowledge.

Forms of communication between different systems

One challenge that the systems theory faces to day is how different function systems relate to each other. Society consists of different function systems which are not hierarchically organized in relation to each other. Luhmann offers two conceptual strategies to discuss a function system's relationship to other function systems. One is about the difference between function and contributions and the other is about structural connections between systems (Hagen 1999: 245). If we say that social welfare services as a part of society's support system should contribute with support, we can for example raise the question what can they offer other systems such as a family. "To talk about the problems themselves" can be such a contribution. When talking about "problem-destined systems" (Anderson and Goolishian 1986) within a system oriented family therapy, it concerns language created systems, which disappear when one has talked oneself out of the problems.

In regard to structural connections, this can be grades and diplomas between the education- and economy system. It is a medium which a system makes available for another system. The recipient system cannot dissolve this medium. According to Moe (1998: 116), within society's welfare system a symbolic generalized medium is missing.

In many ways the professions are doing the work with generalizing the expertise and the connections between the welfare system and other systems. (…) In this way the professions can nearly be considered as the welfare systems medium (ibid[9]).

The area of social work practice

Holistic oriented social work

Systems theory has had great influence on social work since the 70's (Payne 1991: 134). In international social work, the individual-oriented casework-tradition and the society-oriented structural tradition became polarized. There was also a tendency towards a division into various target groups; working with children, immigrants and drug addicts for example. Systems theory represented a holistic and a common model in social work. In the 1960's came a central report about the content and organizing of Norwegian social worker education. (Bernt H. Lund: "Education of Social Workers in Norway. Clarifications and proposals" KUD 1963). Three methods within social work were emphasized: individual social work, social group work and social organization and administration as central methods in the field of social work. From the 1970's more books were written which tried to get across what is common in social work. There was an attempt to make a holistic and common approach from the various parts of social work. This was described with terms such as "integrated", "generic", "ecological", and "systems" –approach (Roberts 1990: 2). One wanted to develop theory for all forms of social work. The theory should be holistic – unifying- and directed towards a special niche for social workers in the field "person-in-environment"(ibid: 3). Such projects aimed at developing general theories have also been criticized for loosing their grip on reality.

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[9]   *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

Social Work Practice: Model and Method (Pincus and Minahan 1973) builds on systems theory, and this book was being used at Norwegian social colleges at the end of the 1970's. A central perspective in this book was to integrate the methods of individual work, and group- and society work. It tried to reach what was common in social work across different methods. The most distinguishing feature of this book was that it introduced four systems in social work: client-, change agent-, goal- and action system. With the change agent system one defines both the social worker and the office he or she is representing. In the action system one will find the people who have the resources to initiate a change. In the goal system are those who have to change to achieve the desired result. This division makes visible the interesting fact that it is not always the clients themselves that have to change. The client does not need to be placed in both the client- and the goal system.

Pincus and Minahan's division between potential and actual clients was also a new sociological term that raised the social workers awareness in their responsibility for different people. "The social worker cannot continue to treat everyone as client" (Roberts 1990: 98). The client system is those who ask for help. If the social worker wants cooperation from parents to form a group to improve the youth environment for their own children, and the parents are not asked about this, then they are potential and not actual clients. "(…) people become clients only when a working agreement or contract has been established between them and a change agent" (Pincus and Minahan 1973: 56). Even though the authors say that one should work at different levels, they still have an individual working method. They emphasize that one should change people and not use vague terms like for example, system: "It should be emphasized that change agents are working to change people, not vague abstractions such as 'the community', 'the organization' or 'the system'" (ibid: 63).

Problem solving in social work

The book *"Social Work Practice: Model and Method* (Pincus and Minahan) was replaced by *"Social Work Processes"* by Compton and Galaway (1st edition 1975) which also discussed generic and holistic models. This book is a synthesis and elaboration of previous knowledge. For their theoretical perspective in social work the authors refer to: systems theory, ego psychology and role theory. "Role

theory and concepts of motivation, stress and coping are developed as links between larger and smaller systems. In addition, systems theory has been proposed as a foundation that gives both theoretical perspective and empirical tools to work within or among all sizes of social systems, from the individual to society and its institutions". (Compton and Galaway 1984: 142). Problem solving is a concept that Perlman (cf. Ch. 4) introduced in social work, according to Compton and Galaway. They say that within a systems theoretical frame, problem solving concerns work both with individuals, groups, organizations and society.

Compton and Galaway also emphasize the exchange between system and change in other systems (ibid: 312).

In the introduction we said that a general characteristic of systems theory was that the systems were seen as goal oriented. This emerges in Compton and Galaways's (1984) model of problem solving which is presented below:

The Contact Phase – Engagement:

Problem identification and definition:

- The problem: – as the client sees it.

- The problem: – as it is defined by the specific systems that the client interacts with (school, family etc.)

- The problem: – as the social worker sees it.

- The problem that is to be worked with and the problem one starts with.

Goal – Identification:

- How does the client want or prefer the problem to be solved

– short-term goal; subsidiary goal. – Long-term goal, main goal.

- What does the client system deem is necessary to solve the problem?

- What sort of help and tools in the problem solving does the client system seek or expect from the office?

- What are the social workers goals for the problem solving?

- What does the social worker believe the support system can or should be able to offer the client as help to reach the goal?

Preliminary contract:

- Clarification of the realities, boundaries and resources in the institution that the social worker can find useful in the work.

- Make visible the content of future work.

- Make appointments or a contract that confirm the client and social worker will continue cooperating. Here one will clarify what rights and expectations the client system has and also secure the social worker entitlement to intervene.

Information gathering:

- Examination of motivation.

– Hope. – Dissatisfaction.

- What alternatives are present?

- The capacity of the clients system?

The Contract Phase:

Assessment and Evaluation:

- The social worker and client must assess if and how the identified problems are connected with the clients needs

- Analysis of the situation with central characteristics

- Reasons why the problem is there, and continues to be there

- Identification of the most critical factors and definition of the connection between them. Segregation of the problems one approaches and works with.

- Identification of available resources, strengths and motivation

- Generalization of problem situations and use of theory

- The specialist's professional evaluation.

Action plan:

- Goals, sub-ordinary goals and principal goals. Assessment and goal setting.

- What alternative goals are possible? Assessment of price and risk according to different goals.

- Procedure. What means or methods should be followed to achieve the changes that one wants?

- Distribution of responsibility between client and social worker and prospective others. What role should the social worker take, based on assessment from the office and the social worker's time and skills? Evaluation of resources both within and outside of the client system.

Prognoses:

- How does the social worker assess the arranged plan?

Intervention phase – Action:

The implementation of the plan:

- Itemization. How should one intervene and decide which form for work, resource and services one will use; what methods to use? Who shall do what, and when?

Conclusion:

- The social worker evaluates together with the client system what meaning and benefits the client has got from the problem solving process and the collaboration with the social worker.

- The social worker's and the client's way to deal with the conclusion/termination, the transfer and the recommendations?

- To take care of what one has achieved or gained in the problem solving process.

Evaluation:

- An ongoing process

- What did one achieve?

- Were the methods used in a suitable way?

If we compare this model with Shuman's interactionistic model presented in chapter three, it can be seen that here there is more focus on problems and goals and the rational, while emotions and interactions are more emphasized in Shulman. Both models are interested in context, structure and the fact that social work takes place through various time-limited phases.

Solution focused model

However, it is possible to obtain a goal and solution focus, without dwelling on the problems. With a starting point in neo systems theory de Shazer (1988) has worked with solution oriented short-term therapy. His model is based on two central statements which are about: 1) Complaints: "statement of complaint" and 2) solutions: "statements of solutions" (ibid: vi). One is focused on solutions and interested in therapy: "The theory explicitly neither includes nor excludes ideas about causation and neither includes nor excludes the various ideas about problem maintenance. It only deals with doing therapy" (ibid: xix). Bateson (1972: 400) uses an example of using jigsaw puzzles to come to this causation. When one lays out a jigsaw one finds clues such as colour and form, and this information helps us in segregating. The piece fits where it meets no resistance. In this way

one can explain actions using least resistance. This is an alternative causal understanding to that which is focused on a linear cause-effect connection.

In solution-focused therapy, the starting point is the clients experience and one is, for example, looking for exceptions to the situation one is complaining about. There is an attempt to reach a difference that makes a distinction. They provide an example (de Shazer 1988) about a family with a 10year old bed-wetter. Through the dialogues it is made clear that he is dry on Wednesday's mornings. The next question is; what is different in this situation. It appears that this is when the father wakes up the boy, instead of the mother. Another clue is to do more of that which already works. The father is told to wake the child more often. After a while the boy does not know if it will be the father or the mother who wakes him, and in this case the bed-wetting problem disappears. De Shazer breaks with common logical thinking and argues that the solution comes before the problem. The problem is just one of many ways to name something one is unhappy with, or that one complains about. They say that "a concept solution must be developed before there can even be a concept called 'problem'" (ibid6–7). Generally we are too problem oriented, they mean: "we end up searching for explanations believing that without explanation a solution is irrational, not recognizing that the solution is its own best explanation" (ibid: 10). Often it is the solution that can show what the problem was!

Social network

Network or social network is what we call a set of stable contacts between people. When people are connected to each other through permanent relations, and at the same time they can limit this contact towards the surroundings, we can use the term social system. Examples of such network or systems are neighborhood, work colleagues or a group of friends. We can identify the groups of friends by asking the question: Who does one invite to a birthday party?

Going back in history, the Norwegian scholar and researcher in social sciences, Eilert Sundt (1817–1875), described phenomenon that we would label social network today and this ties back to who one invited to various banquets (Bo 1993: 39). Sundt uses an example from a rural district of 100 farms, where about 10 farms are invited to each party. We could then easily draw the conclusion that it would be 10 parties in this district. No, says Sundt, it was 100. Each farm had in

fact its own specific dinner party, its social network, which was different from that of the neighbour.

If we move further forwards in history we can find that the international network concept refers back to Norwegian coastal fishing! In network literature it is common to credit the English social anthropologist John Barnes for the term network. Barnes got the idea for the term one day during his stay as researcher at Bremnes in Bomlo, when he sat and watched the waving fishing nets, hung up to dry.

We can find three characteristics for social network:

1   Social network is an informal network. The relations and the contacts are not decided, defined by contracts or regulations. Parts of a family can constitute a social network, while with other family members one has so little contact it is unreasonable to count them as a part of one's own social network. The network can coincide with, include parts of, go across or combine other social systems.

2   The network is not planned or organised for specific purposes. It appears as a result of spontaneous social processes.

3   The network is not a formal decision-making body. However, it is not uncommon that the members appear coordinated towards others. One can have formal organising from a network when a neighbourhood starts to plan improvement of the local surroundings with play parks and road-safety for example. The network can lead them to organise themselves in a residents' association.

Bronfenbrenner

Central in network thinking today is the ecological perspective as it is developed by the American psychologist Bronfenbrenner (1979). Ecological and evolutionary, the theory "is in harmony with the network thinking where one views network members – especially the 'important others'- as models for behaviour and actions, as mediators of knowledge and other influence, and as social inspectors/supervisors" (Bø 1993: 199).

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Bronfenbrenner is regarded as one of the pioneer figures in the ecological approach for development where there is a systematic perspective on socialization. Four systems are being utilized: The microsystem emerges in face-to-face settings. The mesosytem is defined as the relationship between two or more microsituations, that is to say the overlap that exists between two or more arenas. For example; the interaction between home and school becomes important for socialization. The exosystem is situations where the person that we are studying seldom or never is present himself, but has an influence on the young one's situation. For example for an adolescent this can be the workplace of the parents or the committee for the church, culture or education. The macrosystem in Bronfenbrenner is the outer circle which concerns the economical and political situation, the patterns in the greater society, values and traditions.

Bronfenbrenner has a central hypothesis that the interaction on the meso-level is fundamental for human beings' socialization. Research confirms this hypothesis and shows that Norwegian youth scores well in regard to lifestyle and behavior in school, home and society, compared with USA and other European countries (Bø ibid: 201). Bø elaborates this in the following way: "Possibly this is the result of Norwegian youth still commuting between different places such as home, school, workplace, institutions and leisure time arenas, where they are interacting with people in different age groups based on common cultural codes and fundamental values" (ibid[10]).

Regarding relevance for practical social or pedagogical work, the goal is often to change the micro-and exo system into mesosystem. At micro level that means stimulating conversations between various arenas such as school and home, and at an exo-to maso level it can mean that the youth visit the parents' workplaces. "Where Freud has been ascribed the words 'where it earlier were id and superego, it shall be ego', Bronfenbrenner is saying: 'Where it previously were micro and exo, there shall be meso'" (Bø 1993: 28[11]).

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[10] *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

[11] *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

The work on social network is also linked to community work which is one of the subordinate methods in social work. The starting point is groups or local communities, not individuals. Community work within this approach has as a process goal to increase the integration in the local community, develop the social network and to increase the local community's skills to solve their own problem. As a product goal social work serves as a means to help people and groups in the local community who are hard up to improve living standards and achieve concrete environmental improvements.

Family work

To move from the individual to the family was a reorientation in psychiatry. The family formed a unity and a system, with the different family members as elements or parts of the system. The focus was more on how the different family members influenced each other and the relationship between them, rather then the "inner core" in each individual. In social work there was an early focus on family work.

The general system theory was introduced in family therapy through cybernetics and information- and communication theory. Anthropologist Gregory Bateson's research group in Palo Alto has been the central starting point for system theoretical models in work with families. These models which were here-and-now oriented, stood as a contrast to the more historical oriented psychodynamic family models. In Freud inspired models it is central that we take pictures of important persons from our childhood and project them into central people in our life now such as a spouse or children. In systems theory approaches there is less emphasis on why the problems aroused, than that they continue to exist. These theories are in opposition to a linear case-effect way of thinking, and favour a circular causal way of thinking. Famous models within this tradition of family therapy are the strategic, the structural and the systemic model.

Structural family therapy (Minuchin 1974) had as its starting point how the family is organized. The term "dysfunctional" is central. Dysfunctional structures are that which do not promote the individual's growth and thereby are a part of maintaining deviating behavior. The important structural terms are: boundaries, hierarchies, subgroups, alliances, coalitions and triangulations. The latter describing how the child can be in an unfortunate relationship with the parents.

In strategic family therapy (Haley 1988), one is more interested in what function the symptom/problem has for the stability of the family, rather then focusing on how dysfunctional structures are maintained. For example; having a symptom as angst or bed-wetting can be seen as a way of having power and control over the family.

The third school within "systems theory-family" is called systemic family models, and developed with the "Milano group" (Schjødt and Egeland 1989: 160). The development within family work can be described as first being interested in the structure within the family before the focus changed to language and what it is that makes a family system flexible. "In family systemic approaches, the focus is directed towards how complicated interaction patterns in the family contribute to maintain problems for one or more of the members" (Reichelt 1987: 58[12]). The past can be seen as relevant as reflection for change in this school of thinking because it can provide a foundation for making hypotheses. In systemic family work the interviewer can formulate hypotheses based on the information that has been revealed. The hypotheses are neither true nor false, just more or less useful. The essence of a hypothesis is that through it one can arrive at new information. By using hypotheses one can formulate ideas which give alternative explanations and "maps" regarding the problems and the "terrain" that the family represent.

Professor and psychiatrist Tom Anderson from Tromsø has been internationally known for his variation of systemic family therapy. We will call this systemic tradition "The North Norwegian Family Model" (Andersen 1994). One cannot be controlling in this work and this is presented in the model "The change knows its own time and its own ways" (Andersen 1988[13]). In this work there is developed an interdisciplinary educational model tied to systemic work with reflective processes and a special form of work called reflective teams. In these educational groups various occupational groups participate such as doctors, psychologists, social workers, physiotherapists and nurses. The work had a psychiatric hospital in the region as its starting point and there has been a special focus on how to find working models that can also be used in the first line of welfare services, such as

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[12]   *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

[13]   *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

social security offices or public health service. The work has been marked by a downscaling of central psychiatric institutions and thereby an increasing challenge for decentralised psychiatric work. Further, a network of systemic groups has been developed on the Northern Cap. Here one is working in the local communities in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Norway. A shared experience is that success and problems arrive externally and change happens first and foremost by what surrounds people, such as network, language and dialogues (Jaakko Seikkula 2000). This becomes a "reverse principle" compared with traditional psychiatry which is used to think about problems occurring from within, and that the change must happen in the person with the problem.

This work has been inspired by the field of family therapy, and central theorists have been Bateson and later also Goolishian. Goolishian held several seminars in Norway, and he also participated in consultations in direct contact with families, especially in North Norway. This trend has been opposed to an instructive directive way of working with people and it has been emphasized that one can give people ideas, but not decide how people will use these ideas.

Here one was interested in working with people who had "come to a standstill", what we call deadlocked systems. One was also interested in the fact that the interaction between the family and the welfare apparatus could be deadlocked as well. In this work it was also experimented with methods, where the people who had come to a standstill could get ideas and insight in the way a therapist was thinking and reflecting. The goal was said to be important, but most important was the way to reach the goal. (Andersen 1994: 24). This relates to the belief that one cannot force anybody to change. Through experience, therapists had developed methods for work and reflections which they thought could benefit others that asked for consultant assistance. Rather than telling what questions to ask when the helper came behind the one-way-mirror before going back into the family with new questions, methods were worked on to make it more open. It does something to the helper who talks to the family with formulations that the family has no knowledge of. It also does something to the family who sit and wonder what they are talking about behind the mirror.

They tried a new form of work in 1985. Andersen describes a concrete conversation when they were sitting behind the mirror, listening to a young doctor talking to a family. They called in the doctor behind the mirror once and twice, and he went back in to the family with new questions. But the situation was still in a deadlock. Then they made a decision. They knocked on the door and asked if they wanted to listen to their conversation behind the mirror. They connected the microphones and turned on the lights in the room behind the mirror, and the family and the doctor listened to the consultant team's reflections. When they changed the focus again they were very excited. They were prepared to meet anything from people being angry to people being bored, but say that what they got to see were four quiet and thoughtful people, who after a short break started to talk to each other, smiling and optimistic (ibid: 25). To change light and sound gave a surprising freedom in the relation between the consultant team and the family. Andersen says that they were not any longer the only responsible part, they were just one of two parts. This new model became known as the reflective team (idid: 26). The fact that the client listened to the reflections in the team influenced the team as well. One can look at this as two patterns being developed. One pattern is the deadlocked system, and the new system is the deadlocked system plus the reflective team or the consultant team.

Gradually one has become more conscious of the external and the internal conversations that occur in a communication between two persons. Andersen uses the concept that one has moved from a circle to an ellipse:

Figure 7 Parallel internal and external processes
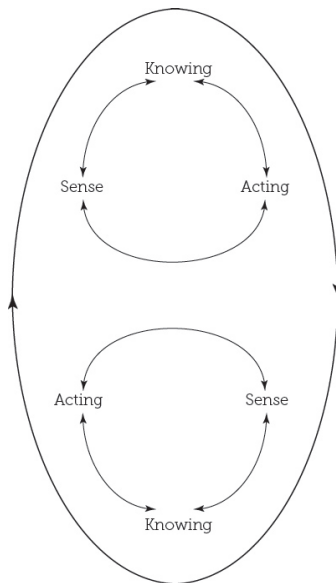
Andersen states that in conversation therapy one needs to be aware if the conversation one has with the person is slow enough for both of them to have time for the internal dialogues (ibid: 43). Gradually Andersen has emphasized reflective processes rather than the form of reflective teams. Different context provides different possibilities to reflect or have dialogues with one-self. On home ground, the client can physically arrange possibilities for self-reflection by, for example, going to the kitchen to make some coffee. In a social welfare office one can, for example, have made it necessary to get a signature and permission from a supervisor before one can give financial support. In presenting the case to a third person one can get new questions and viewpoints, or one can get a new perspective oneself by saying aloud what one is thinking. And also, without leaving a room physically, one can get into other positions than the talkative towards the client. In positions as a listener one has dialogues with oneself.

What one wants to achieve in this work is to arrive at a difference which causes a difference. "A 'bit' of information is definable as a difference which makes a difference" (Bateson 1972: 315). Not all impressions we are exposed to provide information. Bateson's famous expression about a difference which makes a

difference has often been cited in North Norwegian systemic work such as it is described in "Reflective Processes" (Andersen 1994). Andersen is also citing the physiotherapist Aadel Bulow-Hansen's nuance that two differences do not make difference, but the suitable difference makes a change (ibid: 124). If we give someone an advice or an idea that is way too different from what they themself have thought, then the idea will just be defined as unrealistic or not be noticed at all. If the receiver does not experience that we are offering something new, that it is just the same as they have said themselves – then there is too little difference, and the information is "passing by". Afterthoughts, new ways of thinking and feelings without words after a conversation can be what makes a difference and drives the development in a new and more fruitful direction. The art in systemic work is to come up with suitable different ideas, advice and suggestions. In a technological language one could say that "input" needs to be of a sort where something is happening in the system, that we get a noticeable "output" and that the information is not staying dead within the system.

Neutrality by seeing a situation from different viewpoints

In system-oriented works, neutrality is of great importance. One way to define neutrality is to try to view the situation as it looks for the person experiencing it. We must then use the way of thinking from circular cause-effect thinking, by trying to choose various starting points for our understanding of the situation. In work with families this means the ideal is showing interest and respect for the various members' viewpoints, without being seen as showing more sympathy with one of them. As a starting point there is nothing that is more correct or true than something else.

Systemic family therapists linked to the Milano-team (Sevini et.al 1980) have brought up central concepts such as hypotheses, circulation and neutrality in their work. They view the relationship between linear and circular thinking as the relationship between parts and totality: "a linear punctuation is not necessarily incorrect. But it is often misleading because it describes only a segment or a little curve of a greater circulation. One anticipates that the circular perspective

provides a more complete and coherent view" (Tomm 1985, part 1[14]). With circular questions one tries to express differences and focus on the relationship between people. To this working method the neutrality principle is central. Neutrality concerns respect, acceptance and being curious. "The neutral therapist is not interested in blaming someone or changing the system. He or she is intensely inquisitive and only interested in understanding why the system is as it is. The neutral therapist assumes that everything has a meaning."(Tomm 1985, part 2[15])

There is an expression which states that to understand is to forgive. This can be problematic in incest or abusive situations. If a child should view the situation from the adult's point of view then this could easily conceal the criminality and illegality that happened. This can lead to the child placing guilt on him/herself. In usual way of thinking we are punctuating occurrences in one way or another. If the child is not given a clear message that here it is the father who is the guilty and responsible one, it can be that the child places this on him/herself. In systemic thinking one has to safeguard that not everything becomes relative. A research (Aadland 1989) among family therapists who work systemically, shows that they set a boundary on how far their neutrality reaches, in for example abusive cases, however then they call what they are doing: "non-therapy". So, there is a problem with this school of thinking that there are no incorporated moralistic dilemmas such as when there is a "conflict in the client system" and when some actions are "morally reprehensible". One way to solve this is to be eclectic and link other ways of thinking, as for example ethical theory. The problems arise when one views neutrality as a superior principle, instead of one of many choices of values. Aalen Leenderts (1995: 99) expresses this as following: "In my opinion neutrality can never become more than one of many values. Neutrality can never become superior to other values, as for example consideration of the weakest part". If such a therapeutic method does not

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[14] *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

[15] *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

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accommodate for professional evaluations, then it has become a ruler over human beings instead of being a servant of the good (ibid[16]).

The normative family functions are less important in systemic models, differing from the strategic and structural models. When the normative is focused on, there is a division between wanted and unwanted behavior, between "common" and "uncommon" or "healthy" and "ill" (Schjødt and Egeland 1989: 160). In systemic models it is emphasized that all statements are true, and one tries to respect the subjective experience and understanding the individual family member has of the problem. Strategic and structural therapists are seen as "change agents" with clearly defined goals (wanted and healthy behavior).

Minuchin (1991) is critical towards the constructivist-oriented family therapy which emphasizes that therapy is sharing narratives. He says that the power relationship between the therapist and the client does not disappear by calling it something else. The strong focus on language and life stories contributes to institutions and socio-economical relationships and the "brutal reality" can disappear. From South-American reality he uses the following example (ibid):

How could it be good therapy to tell a Salvadorian mother whose eldest son has been 'disappeared' by a rightwing death squad that the members of her family were self-determining, co-creators of their own narratives?

In the earlier part where we described systems theory in sociology, it was central how the system and society "ruled over" the individuals – even though it was stated that in later sociological systems theory the modern self-reflective individual and society entered the scene to a greater extent. We will still emphasize that it is central to take with it what sociology contributes to general systems theory of structures, hierarchy, and power relations in system and sub system. In family work we can say that structural, and in parts strategic family therapy stands in what we have called the older systems theory, while systemic family therapy emphasizes the later development with language and cognition.

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[16] *The quotation has been translated from Norwegian into English.*

"The invisible child" – A system theoretical analysis of a situation in the Mooninvalley

'All right,' Too-ticky said. 'Now, here's your new family. They're a bit silly at times, but rather decent, largely speaking.'

'Give the kid a chair,' Moominpappa said. 'Does she know how to pick mushrooms?'

'I really know nothing at all about Ninny,' Too-ticky said. 'I've only brought her here and told you what I know. Now I have a few other things to attend to. Please look in some day, won't you, and let me know how you get along. Cheerio.'

When Too-ticky had gone the family sat quite silent, looking at the empty chair and the silver bell. After a while one of the chanterelles slowly rose from the heap on the table. Invisible paws picked it clean from needles and earth. Then it was cut to pieces, and the pieces drifted away and laid themselves in the basin. Another mushroom sailed up from the table.

'Thrilling!' My said with awe. 'Try to give her something to eat. I'd like to know if you can see the food when she swallows it.'

'How on earth does one make her visible again,' Moominpappa said worriedly. 'Should we take her to a doctor?'

'I don't think so, 'said Moominmamma. 'I believe she wants to be invisible for a while. Too-ticky said she's shy. Better leave the kid alone until something turns up.'

And so it was decided.

The eastern attic room happened to be unoccupied, so Moominmamma made Ninny a bed there. The silver bell tinkled along after her upstairs and reminded Moominmamma of the cat that once had lived with them. At the bedside she laid out the apple, the glass of juice and the three striped pieces of candy everybody in the house was given at bedtime.

Then she lighted a candle and said:

'Now have a good sleep, Ninny. Sleep as late as you want. And if you happen to get a funny feeling or if you want anything, just come downstairs and tinkle.'

Moominmamma saw the quilt raise itself to from a very small mound. A dent appeared in the pillow. She went downstairs again to her own room and started looking through her granny's old notes about Infallible Household Remedies. Evil Eye. Melancholy. Colds. No. There didn't seem to be anything suitable. Yes, there was. Towards the end of the notebook she found a few lines written down at the time when Granny's hand was already rather shaky. 'If people start getting misty and difficult to see.' Good. Moominmamma read the recipe, which was rather complicated, and started at once to mix the medicine for little Ninny.

The bell came tinkling downstairs, one step at the time, with a small pause between each step. Moomintroll had waited for it all morning. But the silver bell wasn't the exciting thing. That was the paws. Ninny's paws were coming down the steps. They were very small, with anxiously bunched toes. Nothing else of Ninny was visible. It was very odd.

Moomintroll drew back behind the porcelain stove and stared bewitchedly at the paws that passed him on their way to the verandah. Now she served herself some tea. The cup was raised in the air and sank back again. She ate some bread and butter and marmalade. Then the cup and saucer drifted away to the kitchen, were washed and put away to the closet. You see, Ninny was a very orderly little child.

Moomintroll rushed out in the garden and shouted: 'Mamma! She's got paws! You can see her paws!'

I thought as much, Moominmamma was thinking where she sat high in the apple tree. Granny knew a thing or two. Now when the medicine starts to work we'll be on the right way.

'Splendid,' said Moominpappa. 'And better still when she shows her snout one day. It makes me feel sad to talk with people who are invisible. And who never answer me.'

'Hush, dear,' Momminmamma said warningly. Ninny's paws were standing in the grass among the fallen apples.

'Hello Ninny,' shouted My. 'You've slept like a hog. When are you going to show your snout? You must look a fright if you've wanted to be invisible.'

'Shut up,' Moomintroll whispered, 'she'll be hurt.' He went running up to Ninny and said:

'Never mind My. She's hardboiled. You're really safe here among us. Don't even think about that horrid lady. She can't come here and take you away …'

In a moment Ninny's paws had faded away and become nearly indistinguishable from the grass.

'Darling, you're an ass,' said Momminmamma. 'You can't go about reminding the kid about those things. Now pick apples and don't talk rubbish.

They all picked apples.

After a while Ninny's paws became clearer again and climbed one of the trees.

(…)

My gave a laugh and banged the table with her spoon.

'Fine that you've started talking,' she said. 'Hope you have anything to say. Do you know any good games?'

'No,' Ninny piped. 'But I've heard about games.'

Moomintroll was delighted. He decided to teach Ninny all the games he knew.

After coffee all three of them went down to the river to play. Only Ninny turned out to be quite impossible. She bobbed and nodded and very seriously replied, quite, and how funny, and of course, but it was clear to all that she played only from politeness and not to have fun.

'Run, run, can't you!' My cried. 'Or can't you even jump?'

Ninny's thin legs dutifully ran and jumped. Then she stood still again with arms dangling. The empty dress neck over the bell was looking strangely helpless.

'D'you think anybody likes that?' My cried. 'Haven't you any life in you? D'you want a biff on the nose?'

'Rather not,' Ninny piped humbly.

'She can't play,' mumbled Mommintroll.

'She can't get angry,' little My said. 'That's what's wrong with her. 'Listen you,' My continued and went close to Ninny with a menacing look. 'You'll never have a face of your own until you've learned to fight. Believe me.'

'Yes, of course,' Ninny replied, cautiously backing away.

(…)

'What's come over Ninny? Is she frightened?' asked Moominpappa.

'Perhaps she hasn't seen the sea before,' Moominmamma said. She stooped and exchanged a few whispering words with Ninny. Then she straightened up again and said:

'No, it's the first time. Ninny thinks the sea's too big.'

'Of all the silly kids,' little My started, but Moominmamma gave her a severe look and said: 'Don't be a silly kid yourself. Now let's pull the boat ashore.

They went out on the landing-stage to the bathing hut where Too-ticky lived, and knocked at the door.

'Hullo,' Too-ticky said, 'how's the invisible child?'

'There's only her snout left,' Momminpappa replied.

'At the moment she's a bit startled but it'll pass over. Can you lend us a hand with the boat?

'Certainly,' Too-ticky said.

While the boat was pulled ashore and turned keel upwards Ninny had padded down to the water's edge and was standing immobile on the wet sand. They left her alone.

Moominmamma sat down on the landing-stage and looked down into the water. 'Dear me, how cold it looks,' she said. And then she yawned a bit and added that nothing exciting had happened for weeks.

Moominpappa gave Moomintroll a wink, pulled a horrible face and started to steal up to Moominmamma from behind.

Of course he didn't really think of pushing her in the water as he had done many times when she was young. Perhaps he didn't even want to startle her, but just to amuse the kids a little.

But before he reached her a sharp cry was heard, a pink streak of lightening shot over the landing-stage and Moominpappa let out a scream and dropped his hat into the water. Ninny had sunk her small invisible teeth in the Moominpappa's tail, and they were sharp.

'Good work!' cried My. 'I couldn't have done it better myself!'

Ninny was standing on the landing-stage. She had a small, snub-nosed, angry face below a red tangle of hair. She was hissing at Moominpappa like a cat.

'Don't you dare push her into the big horrible sea!' she cried.

'I see her, I see her!' shouted Moomintroll. 'She's sweet!'

'Sweet my eye,' said Momminpappa, inspecting his bitten tail. 'She's the silliest, nastiest, badly-brought-uppest child I've ever seen, with or without a head.'

He knelt down on the landing-stage and tried to fish for his hat with a stick. And in some mysterious way he managed to tip himself over, and tumbled in on his head.

He came up at once, standing safely on the bottom, with his snout above water and his ears filled with mud.

'Oh dear!' Ninny was shouting. 'Oh, how great! Oh, how funny!'

The landing-stage shook with her laughter.

'I believe she's never laughed before,' Too-ticky said wonderingly. 'You seem to have changed her, she's even worse than little My. But the main thing is that one can see her, of course.'

'It's all thanks to Granny,' Moominmamma said.

(from; Tove Jansson Tales from Moominvalley, translated by Thomas Warburton, Puffin Books, the Penguin Group 1973, London. Pp 107–119)

Interpreting central parts from the text

• About the help that Ninny receives from being in the Moominfamily

The first set of questions is related to the "six central characteristics within systems theory" which we presented in the beginning of this chapter:

1 How is an individual formed by the various contexts he or she participates in? How does Ninny become different in her old and her new family?

2 How can we interpret people's actions in different situations as goal oriented behavior? What form of help would one want to give to Ninny?

3　How do the people in the story deal with circular causal thinking that concerns the variety of reasons and the way people influence each other, without being incapable of acting? What types of hypotheses do the family make about connections when they analyze the situation of the invisible child – Ninny – and how do they as a family behave towards Ninny? What do the different people in the text believe is Ninny's problem, and based on these, form their 'analysis'.

4　How is equilibrium and change processes expressed in this story? What can be identified as negative feedback, where the old situation-definition is maintained, and Ninny continues or becomes again invisible. What type of input does Ninny receive which has the effect as positive feedback, where she changes from being invisible to being visible?

5　How do new systems arise throughout the story by development of boundaries and where there is more communication between some people than others. How is it possible to draw a picture of the systems in the story by the system boundaries in the beginning and at the end of the story for example?

6　How is it that some communications appear as people being parts of different *systems,* while other communication is more coincidental and has less stability over time?

These questions can be summarized into the following question: *How to realize the goal with Ninny staying in the Moominfamily, – to make her visible?*

The story starts with Ninny, who is the invisible child, being presented for her new Moominfamily. The new family sees the goal of Ninny moving from her old family to them and that they are going to help her to become visible. Earlier, Ninny lived with a family where she was not treated well and her reaction towards the difficult situation was to become invisible. She had her potential reduced and now she is placed in an environment which is meant to make her grow and be able to express herself. Throughout the story we can see how she becomes more visible, step-by-step, by first seeing her feet. But, also in this family she is met with feedback which initiates processes where she becomes less visible again. One of those sad episodes was to be reminded about her horrid aunty. Moominmamma

is sensitive to Ninny's situation and shows her concern, warmth and security – which become aberration-strengthening processes (positive feedback) – to change Ninny into becoming a visible part of the new family.

The family comes up with various interpretations of what Ninny's problem can be and how they can help her. Moominmamma starts with a hypothesis which sees Ninny as a normal, shy child. Moominmamma signals that they need to treat Ninny with respect and not act too quickly or without consideration. They should leave her alone until they have come up with a better alternative. In this way Ninny gets the time and possibility to feel what it is like to be in this new family. Throughout the story there are various hypotheses. For example, Little My believes that Ninny's problem is that she cannot get angry. Later in the story Ninny becomes angry with Mumminpappa and bites him, because she believes he is going to throw Moominmamma into the sea. Ninny has developed a good contact with Moominmamma. At the end of the story we can see that Ninny has changed, and she is being described by Too-ticky as more naughty than earlier. However, this is not to worry about is the "moral" in the story, since what is most important is that she has become visible and a whole person again.

•   The contact between Ninny and Moominmamma as a turning point in the story.

Our other set of questions relate to themes such as *"Psychic and social systems, the relationship between a systems and the system's surroundings."*

1   How can one describe a psychic system with help from the text above? How do we get access to peoples' consciousness-processes which create meaningful communication for them?

2   How can social systems be described with help from the actual text? How is it that some forms of communication contribute to a much greater extent to boundaries being set and social systems made, than other forms of talk between people?

3   How can different forms of communication between systems be identified? One form of communication is help given freely to each other. Another type is that which is expressed in more formal channels of communication such as

structural connections; either it is a medium or historically evolved traditions and norms which characterize the various systems.

4   How does the relationship between systems and the surroundings change, depending on what discussions and themes are being placed within or outside of the system? How does the system handle the problem of complexity by maintaining a suitable degree of complexity and creativity in the internal communication? How to keep the balance when inability to act can happen if the change is either too big or too small?

These questions can be summarized in the following question to the text: What various systems have evolved during the story and what type of communication is happening within and between the systems?

The central person in this story is Ninny, we still don't know much about her as a psychic system, because we are not taking part in her thoughts. Ninny becomes visible as a part of invisible systems, where she first communicates non-verbally with the others and then after awhile also verbally. Moominmamma is the person who becomes the most visible psychic system in this story. She invites the readers into her thoughts and her consciousness world. It is she that interprets the others' behavior towards Ninny and says for example: "Shush, she gets hurt". She tries to show the others what Ninny is thinking.

The 'important other person' for Ninny is Moominmamma, and the two of them constitute a social system where boundaries are drawn against the others. For example, Ninny whispers something to Moominmamma who is trusted to pass it on to the others. Other systems that Ninny participates in are in the play with the other children. Here she receives comments that she has to reply to depending on how she experiences the situation, for example when she is scared. In the beginning of the story it seems like she is reacting in a learned automatic way about what is expected and answers politely. This does not lead to much play or fun.

At the end of the story Moominmamma gives the honor to grandma that Ninny has become visible. She links this to the medium "the Household Remedies", that grandma based her recipe on. But maybe Moominmamma had learnt through her own history, a structural connection to behavior and norms, about what creates

life in a family and how she could make Ninny visible. This Moominfamily had developed various norms for how they should handle life between them, which are about being direct, knowing your place and to joke and fool around – use of humor.

As the story develops the family becomes more confident and daring as to what sort of input they give to the psychic system of Ninny. First, a trust and confidence is built up which causes Ninny not to disappear when she meets opposition and provocations. Ninny has maybe not ended up so honorable, obedient and adapted to the various systems as she was when she came to the family. But as it is said at the end of the story; the main thing is that she is visible and differs from others and has stopped being invisible. A central turning point in the story is the relation and the social system that Moominmamma and Ninny develop between them.

Criticism of systems theory in social work

Systems theory originated from natural science and was modified and used within social sciences. Today systems theory is a school of thought within an abundance of disciplines and various health- and social work professions. Why has this theory become so popular? One reason for this is that the various disciplines and professions within social sciences have an ambition to say something about the big picture and the dynamic between the individual and society. Even though the big picture looks different from different viewpoints, the various professions use the concept holistic approach about their work. There has also been a whish to develop theories which analytically can assist them in grasping the big picture, and in this regard systems theory has been useful.

One criticism towards system theory in social work is that it is too ambitious when arguing the theory can be used for all purposes. Holistic or so-called generic models in social work are based on or take their inspiration from systems theory. These models are helpful for working at individual, group and society levels and they should be used for working with people in different age groups and with different social problems. This ambition has been criticized by Roberts, among others, who says "social work cannot be 'all thing to all people.' It needs to be more modest in its domain and this enable a more rigorous approach to its theory" (1990: 246).

Another criticism has been that systems theory implies that the social worker has a role as a change agent. The description of the social worker as a change agent is, for example, expressed in Pincus and Minahan: "Social workers work with many different kinds of people in their planned change efforts" (1973: 53). Bisno (Roberts 1990: 19) criticizes the use of "change agent" as synonymous with a social worker because one makes the fundamental mistake of mixing goals and means. It is the goal in social work that needs to be central. Sometimes the goal can be change, while other times it can be a goal to maintain a situation, to hinder or reduce a detoriation. It can also be about performing a custodial service for those applying for financial support. By describing the social worker as a change agent one can get the impression that it is change itself that is the goal. Butrym (1992) criticizes the emphasis of making a change as a shared overall goal for social work. She is skeptical towards Pincus and Minahan's (1973) book which she argues mechanizes social work. It is made into a manipulative work by not reflecting upon ethical questions. By covering so broadly when one wants to work generically with all sub methods, one loses a part of the depth and standard of reflection that characterize more demarcated social work.

Systems theory is also criticized for lack of a developed theory about the individual and his/her development. Maybe this lack of emphasis on the individual is linked to the weak focus on morals and ethics. In systems theory one focuses a circular not a linear causal thinking. This can be problematic in incest- and abusive situations. If a child is to view the situation from an adult's point of view, this can lead to diminishing the criminal and illegal elements that have happened. There is no stand taken and conflicts of interests are not identified as they would be in conflict theory. This can lead to the child placing the guilt on itself. In normal thinking we punctuate events in one way or another. If the child is not receiving a clear opinion of the mother's or father's guilt and responsibility, then it can be that the child places this on her/himself. In systemic thinking it is a challenge to keep in mind that not everything is relative. When one is viewing the world from different perspectives it can be questioned where the morals, values and the absolutes are placed? Or is it that there are no absolutes? In that case one could say that the theory encounters limits in the legal system which explains actions from a cause-effect perspective and from a perspective of purpose. In a court case the intention in the moment of action can be of consequence to the sentencing. The functional explanation about what actually happened is not the central

approach in the juridical apparatus. Systems theory is more useful in 'support relations' than in penalty and sentencing situations where thinking in systemic terms is not applicable to any great extent.

Another criticism that we want to focus on which is linked to the previous paragraph about neutralism, is the philosophy of harmonization in relation to the ruling society's conditions. One could say that systems theory is marked by a focus on the difference between 'is' and 'should be'. As a professional, one has the responsibility to shed light on how the situations are experienced by the various participants, but one needs to be careful of not to take a judgmental stance. In its consequence this professional approach supports the ruling structures of power and the existing imbalance in society.

With social work as a starting point one can be critical towards too strong an emphasis on later systems theory where structure and external conditions are less important and there is a focus on language and cognition. Many social workers' workplaces have strong systems demands on them to follow laws, rules and bureaucratic norms developed within the concrete welfare society. In situations like that it can be more fruitful to analyze a situation based on hierarchy and older systems theory.

Summary

Central characteristics of systems theory in social work

- Society and the external environment have an influence on what is happening at a micro level.

- Society consists of systems formations.

- We understand the world through system specific horizons; this is making the world less complex for us.

- Each system creates its own world.

- Social systems are created through communication.

- There are different forms of feedback to the system; such as positive feedback and negative feedback.

Action models and the relationship social worker – client

- We have family work and network models that are based on system theoretical thinking.

- Various system/categorizing in social work (according to Pincus & Minahan and Compton & Galaway.

- Problem solving model which also shows how the work is divided in phases.

- We cannot govern people, only give them ideas.

- There is an emphasis on roles and of rights and duties.

- Information that is suitably different leads to change and is thereby a "difference that creates a difference".

- The work is solution oriented.

Value orientation

- The place in the context is the reason for how the individual acts.

- The "best" is that which win the fight for life, "survival of the fittest".

- There is a harmony-oriented view on society.

- Neutrality is essential, as being able to see a case from different perspectives.

- One is value neutral because no values are seen as better than others.

Criticism

- The view on human life can be too deterministic if one focuses on people as governed by their place in the system – people can be too system loyal.

- One can become conservative by saying that what is is what should be, "the best it that which defeats".

- The structural and the determined are not emphasized enough in newer systems theory because of a focus on "the construction of new stories and language systems".

- In newer systems theory one can get the impression that everything is floating and everything is relative, society dissolves itself into various systems.

- Moralistic questions are overlooked.

- The ambition of being holistic oriented can override the depth of reflections in the theory.

Chapter 7:
Different theories will contribute to variations in the social worker's professional performance

Introduction

With this book it is our hope that we are able to show that the social worker is a part of an extensive tradition. In international literature it is common to use the hyphen before the word social work to describe sub-fields in social work, and Payne (1991) for example, uses a group of 10 theories and perspectives, while in an American context (Turner 1986), over 20 various models are presented. Various theories and models have influenced each other, and it is not always easy to determine within which field a model or perspective belongs. One criterion, to determine which field a model belongs to, is if we can identify the field, or parts of it, within the area of social work practice. Another criterion is that the theory or model is taught at Health and Social Work faculties at university colleges, and thereby recognised as useful for practice or pedagogical support. It is also important to have in mind which models and theories are seen as significant internationally. Based on these criterions we made a choice of the following five perspectives which comprise the field of social work in a Norwegian context: System theory, Psychodynamic theory, Learning theories, Interactionist theory and Conflict theory. For the most part, we have followed the traditional division as in, for example, sociology and psychology.

The foundation for our work has been the rather ambitious saying: 'There is nothing as practical as a good theory." Reading about the history of the discipline, the various cross roads, debates and focus can be useful instrumentally, making us aware of how we as human beings often view things "step by step". A description of theories and their different focus may help us to see where we stand in the big picture, and from which foundation we give our opinions. We must position ourselves and be clear in what we express. In social work it is useful to be self reflecting and aware of one's own role in social work (Halvorsen 2003). But, at the same time, it is to take it too far if one becomes incapable of acting by being stuck in theoretical musings about what to do and how to act. Practice has its own logic, which we cannot fully think through before we throw ourselves into action.

We are of the opinion that the development within the discipline would benefit from social workers being more conscious about which model/s they use and identify with. This would lead to a deeper and increased level of reflection in the area of Social work. We may even develop more consequential approaches and working methods together with others, as well as becoming aware of the limitations of the methods being used already. Besides, for social workers it is necessary to take on responsibility for actions and also be able to defend them. This will improve the theoretical progress in social work and also the debate about what is good social work, and therefore contributes to the development of social work as an independent field.

When comparing the various models one needs to ask which areas of practice they are more or less helpful in regard to. Most social workers will have an eclectic and selective relationship to theory, which is quite natural since it is practice, and not theory, that is at the centre in the field of social work. The various schools also seem to influence each other. One takes attractive, fruitful methods from other models and integrates them into the original main model. Even though the different models seem to become more alike, we find it important to know the differences between them, especially in order to make various hypotheses within ones work. In addition, questions and focus from other models can be used for asking critical questions about the model being used.

In this closing chapter we want to sum up the most important characteristics for each of the theories, and then ask some questions to focus on some specific elements in the various models. The first question is about what perspective and focus the various theories generate: What in the situation attracts the most attention? Then we will look at how the various theories explain human interaction: Why do humans act in certain ways? The third question is linked to what the various theories view as "the good life" and what they see as the goal for social work: What is the goal for the individual? Our fourth area of focus is the position of the social worker. What is the social worker's central task according to the relevant theory. Afterwards we will examine how much power the social worker has in the various perspectives. Finally, we group the various theories and models according to their view on society; originating from a harmonious or a conflicting point of view.

The five theories provide the social worker with different perspectives

Psychodynamic theory

When describing models and theories in social work, the most dominant is the casework tradition, with Mary Richmond as the pioneer. Later on, this tradition absorbed many of Freud's theories. Erikson developed the psychodynamic theory further in a psychosocial direction, in which the ego's relationship to society was emphasized. In social work we now call this tradition psyhodynamic theories, where the unconscious and concealed are highlighted. In recent times, Wood and Hollies are the dominant theorists within this tradition, but we will also position Bernler's and Johnsson's contribution to psychosocial theory in social work within this field, even though they also combined psychosocial theory with system theory.

The criticism of psychodynamic perspectives is that it is easy to be too preoccupied with the psychodynamic processes within the individual and by this conceal the processes and structures in society which created the problems for the individual. Because of this the models have been criticised for not developing methods and models for community oriented work.

When the focus is on unconscious processes, the social worker is given the role as the expert and the one who knows more about the client than the client him/herself. As a consequence, the psychodynamic models are based more on facts than an interpretative paradigm. The client is to a great extent stripped of control of the work he or she is being exposed to.

This weakness can in other circumstances be this theory's strength. People who are falling apart or who find themselves in a crisis, or experiencing a lack of control in their life, may find it comforting that a professional takes control. The strength in these perspectives is that there is a thorough understanding of the human being.

The most important question in regard to social work is not about which position to take towards the psychodynamic models, but about how useful they are in the social worker's mandate in society – to work with social problems at different

levels. One cannot expect a yes /no answer here, rather it will be the various work contexts which will determine how fruitful this theory will be.

When relating this to the characteristics in the table on page 181 the following pattern appears:

The unconscious plays an important role in this theory. The focus is on getting in touch with and understanding that which is not conscious. This is because it is seen as having an influence on thoughts, actions and feelings. The theory emphasizes that we carry around with us all our previous experiences. Only a small part of this is conscious. The biggest part of our experiences will remain unconscious.

Further, the reasons for present actions lie in the individual's personal story, and thereby we can be seen as a product of our previous experiences. History has influenced our psychic health, the strength of the ego and how we relate to others. Experiences which are not resolved in a way that leads to personal growth, leads to a lot of energy being used on repression or other defence mechanisms. It is therefore important to get to know the life story in order to process earlier experiences.

The goal is to be free from unfortunate fixations in the unconscious so that energy can be used for development and growth and focus on the here and now. Previous phases or traumatic episodes in life that have been solved in unfortunate ways are seen as having a negative impact on the present. To process this is decisive in order to free up strength for daily life matters and demands.

The social worker is focused on coming in contact with the unconscious and to help disclose this 'material'. Trust is seen as crucial in the relationship between the social worker and the client, so that the client dares to bring forward what is difficult; to shed light on it and process it.

The social worker holds a lot of power in this model. This is because it is assumed that the client will show resistance to getting in close proximity to "dangerous" unconscious experiences. The interpretation of what is said is vital in this theory. It can be argued that the value-perspective in psychodynamic theories causes the social worker to take various viewpoints, and not be objective in their job. The

theory presents a view that earlier experiences are the reason for what happens today. This leads the social worker to take a stand as to which hypotheses about the problems would be the most important in his or her work. This can also be seen as a method of power. Society places demands on human beings, and especially the id-part of the personality raises against these demands, based on the wish of satisfying one owns needs. These external demands may cause inner conflicts that the ego has to handle.

Interactionism

We have chosen to use the collective term interactionist theory from the tradition associated with Mead, Addams, Shulman, Loegstrup and Martinsen. This is a tradition where an active, meaning-seeking subject is central, and the work is often directed towards micro situations.

As in the psychodynamic perspectives, it is also one of the strengths in the interactionist models that there is a consistent and comprehensive view of the individual. The foundation is Mead's theory about the self as socially created. In Addam's thinking it is crucial to see the other's perspective.

If we compare the interactionist models with the psychodynamic models, it is the interpretation and construction of the situation in the interaction between people which is noticeable. Within this tradition it is emphasized that when we as humans notice things or express something, this reveals how we as human beings cannot experience the world in another way than in an interpreted version. Within phenomenology, which is a part of interactionism, the subjective experiences of each individual are emphasized. In another school of this tradition, symbolic interactionism, an interplay between a subjective and a more objective and shared human experience is emphasised. For example, symbolic interactionist Blumer (1969) says "There is a hardness in the world" and by this he means that there are structures and material which we cannot make disappear by our interpretation or language. Other theories, with different foundations, would criticise interactionists for not taking into consideration the deterministic effect that structures and society have on the individual. It is true that interactionist theory does emphasize human beings free will, their influence and their potential for taking control of a situation by interpreting and defining it.

If we look at the various points in the table on page 181 we can see that interactionism focuses on the interaction itself in a situation. The participants in the situation are in a process together where they continually create and recreate new modes of negotiations. Shulman, for example, uses the expression "working relation" about the climate that a client and a social worker develop so that together they are able to "get the job done".

To understand why people behave in different ways, we have to study their practice, and look at people's behaviour in a situation in a specific context. It is difficult to know in advance what will happen in a face-to-face encounter between people. On the other hand we can obtain a more objective knowledge about the patterns and norms guiding typical actions and behavior in human encounters within various welfare state-institutions.

Human beings behave according to what they find meaningful. The Thomas Theorem captures this way of thinking by saying "*If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences".* In this theory the goal for each human being is to experience life as meaningful, to find a purpose and a connection in their life.

The social worker helps the clients name their experiences to make their life consist of coherent meaningful stories. The important thing is not so much what really happened, but the client's subjective experiences.

The social worker's power is not as dominant in this theory, because one cannot claim something to be true or correct when coming from this objective viewpoint. He or she has to relate to the client's reality and strive to be on the same wavelength as the client. In interactionism the focus is on bringing forward various definitions of reality, and not expressing one's own viewpoint. The social worker's goal is to appear objective.

Interactionism as it is performed in social work, is focused only to a minimal extent on the processes in society. However, deviance theories and cultural studies within this tradition may provide a change of focus from the micro context between the social workers and clients. In the interactionist tradition one is not normally concerned about what is right and what is wrong, rather the focus is on understanding situations and why they develop as they do. When there is no protest against the structures in society, nor any expressed solidarity with the

weaker and poorer ones in society, this perspective can, in its consequence, be seen as a harmonious view on society.

Learning theories

A third tradition is the use of learning theories. Behavior, and changing it, is at the centre in these models. There is also a focus on how the environment influences behavior. In these models the social worker is described as goal oriented. The theoretical roots go back to classical cognitive theory which was focused on outer observable behavior. In social learning theory, behavior is seen as something learnt in a context. Also included here are the mental processes.

One of the strengths of learning theories is that they developed methods for practical work. The criticism though, is that in their eagerness to achieve visible results, they can become manipulating. These theories were placed on the agenda as a reaction towards psychodynamic perspectives. In learning theories one was not concerned with the unconscious processes, but more with the visible behaviour. Also within this tradition, there has been a greater acceptance of coercion than in other traditions. It is easy then to feel in conflict with a central ethical principle in social work which is; "the clients' right to self determination, to decide for themselves". Stimulus/ response thinking has been criticised for not seeing the human being as a unique individual, and that it can lead to a simplified and mechanical view of the human being. However, in social learning theory, where the cognitive processes and the "creative being" is also emphasized, the individuality of the human being is in the forefront.

Even in the name of this theory lies a difference from other theories. In cognitive-behavioral theory the focus is on behaviour. In social work this does not include all kinds of behavior. The client does not get in contact with the social worker until there is a behavior that is problematic for the client them self or those close to them.

Human behavior is understood as a reaction to other people's reaction to this behavior, and the consequences this has for us. This learning can also take place through modeling. We see others that we identify with receive reactions to their behavior, and we learn without necessarily being in the situation our selves.

Through these models it is emphasized that a good life for human beings is to live in a social context. It becomes a goal to live with other people without one's behavior causing difficulties. Well adapted, contextual behavior leads people to live in harmony with each other. What is characteristic for the relationship between the social worker and client is that the social worker gives the client tasks in order to build the client's competency.

The social worker's power is vast compared to the client in this tradition. This is because the social worker is seen as a teacher and as the person controlling the helping process. On the other hand, in many of these models it is stated that it is the client themselves who are to set the goal of the work. The set of values in this theory is related to the social worker taking a point of view. There are relatively clear hypotheses about causalities. The behavior is seen as something learnt and it can be unlearnt by the same principles.

Learning theories have a harmonious view on society. Adaptability to the existing society and learning how to fill the roles with functional role behavior is fundamental.

Conflict theory

Conflict theory is linked to various freedom movements and feminist, radical and Marxist models. Society is seen as filled with groups and issues in opposition to each other and there are conflicting interests in society. Based on feminist theory, gender is seen as such an issue. Linked to these models we can also trace back to the historic roots of Jane Addams. In a Marxist perspective having access to economic resources is seen as crucial.

In conflict theory it is explicit that one is placed in a real struggle- or anti oppressive-context. It is also explicit what positions and alliances one is a part of.

An increasing number of social workers would claim to belong to this tradition. The main criticism of these models is that they have an explicit political ideology related to socialism. The strength in this is that it's clear that in all social work the social worker needs to take a stand and give his or her opinion from a definite position. This puts on the agenda the issue of being neutral and without any conflict of interests.

This perspective has contributed to new views on phenomena, shed new lights on connections that have not been noted previously and it has directed attention to conflicts of interests and the division of power. The models within conflict theory have addressed themselves towards women, black people or other underprivileged groups.

The first three theories we have presented have, to a various degree, had their focus on the individual level while, in general, conflict theory is directed towards society. This has also lead to criticism such as the focus on creating a collective consciousness among the clients has been detrimental to the care of each individual client's immediate need. Conflict theory is also often seen as the opposite to system theory and functional explanations. In these theories one is generally focused on the execution of power. The focus is both on the power of the social worker opposite the client and how people with power administer this power in society.

When raising the question of why people behave as they do within this theory, conflict theory points towards the external conditions. The foundation is that a conflict of interests already exists, and the ones with material, political and ideological power have greater opportunities to influence how other members of society behave. Powerlessness and reactions to powerlessness are seen as a result of other people's execution of power.

The goal is to create a decent human life together with others. Action and reflection are seen as two sides of the same issue on the road towards reaching the goal. If the two parts were divided it could lead to alienation.

The task of the social worker is to arrange for the clients to be able to improve the situation themselves. The social worker will assist in analysing the person's living situation so that it is seen in connection with society's conditions overall. This consciousness raising is often done together with others. Such group- processes are part of mobilising strength to change problem-causing conditions. Here, it is presumed that the social worker plays the part of organiser.

In conflict theory the social workers' power is delimited by being clearly expressed and visible in the relationship. The people involved are all part of investigating what is causing the problem, the goal of the work and how to work to reduce the

problematic conditions. Solidarity and taking a position towards suppressed groups cause the social worker to take a clear position and as such, he or she is not being neutral. In conflict theory, existing truths are seen with a critical eye and from the position of those with little power.

In these models one is focused on the conflict of interests. It is understood that the ones with power develop their own culture where they take care of their own interests. Society develops through conflicts where different interests are being confronted. Out of these conflicts emerge new creations.

System theories

System theory is a dominant tradition within social work. In this tradition we have had books about holistic models, such as Pincus and Minahan and Compton and Galaway. System-, ecological-, and network- theory are all traditions in social work that can be identified within system theory. If we broaden the horizon further we have the family models. In sociology this tradition is identified as functionalistic, based on Durkheim's and, later on, Parson's system theory. Harmonious thinking and "the survival of the fittest" are at core in this tradition. System theory argues that the whole is something different to the sum of the separate parts. Luhman is one name that is linked to the 'newer' system theory, which is also called constructivism. Here we can find parallels to systemic family therapy which are focused on language-created systems, such as in Luhman.

System theory is seen as having its foundation at a macro level. The theory is helpful in perceiving some of the more complex situations and in promoting a more holistic approach within social work, such as work in the local environment. The focus is placed on various levels, such as individual, group, and community work. It is what is common in social work at the various levels that becomes important. The criticism of system theory is that has become superficial in trying to cover too much and that it is not seeing things in depth.

System theory searches for various system formations. That is; relatively stable interactive situations where there is more communication between people within a system than across the system.

When we are within a system, we behave accordingly to how the situation appears to us from this point of view. We therefore change behavioral patterns depending on which system contexts we are a part of; we perform different roles at work than we do at home, for example.

Within these models human beings are seen as striving for meaningful interactions and contexts with others. The social systems are bound together by the effort in creating meaningful communication.

The social worker's responsibility is to help the client to adapt to the existing situation. The clients themselves are the ones to decide what is seen as the best way to adapt.

The social worker's power is not great in this theory because the client's own experience of the situation is the dominating one. The social worker has as his or her goal to be neutral by interchangeably presenting the various voices and opinions that are valid within a system.

An underlying principle in this perspective is that the best systems are the ones surviving in the struggle of existence. It presents a harmonious view on society and development within society.

Table of the variations between five theories in social work

Theories / models	Psycho dynamic theory	Interactionism	Learning theories	Conflict theory	System theory
What is the focus in the situation?	The unconscious	Social interaction	Behaviour	Execution of power	Formation of system
Why do people behave in special ways?	The origin of behavior is in the life history of the person	The reasons for behavior lie in what the parties in the situation trigger in each other.	The reason for behavior is rooted in the learning of consequences of behaviour.	Those with material, political and ideological power influence how members in society behave.	The connections, that is, the system we are part of – is most important in determining our actions.
What is the goal for the individual?	To be a liberated human being	To experience life as meaningful	To live together with other people	Together with others create more human worth /dignity	Together with others create more meaningful system
The social worker's position	The social worker will rouse the unconscious material in the client	The social worker contributes in creating a description of the client's situation	The social worker gives exercises for the client.	The social worker lays the ground for the sup-pressed to improve their situation themselves	The social worker supports the client in adapting to the existing situation.
The social worker's power	Large	Medium	Large	Little	Medium
View on society	(internal) conflict	Harmony	Harmony	Conflict	Harmony

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