TRANSFORMING SUBJECTIVITIES

STUDIES IN HUMAN MALLEABILITY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Edited by
Cecilia Hansen Löfstrand and Kerstin Jacobsson

Routledge

Transforming Subjectivities

This volume examines the transformation of subjectivities following contemporary societal trends with regulatory and administrative authorities targeting human subjectivity with the aim to transform it. It addresses the malleability of human subjectivity through rich qualitative analyses of how different governing attempts are received by the subjects themselves. While the scholarship on governmentality has so far produced an enormously useful body of literature on the 'how' aspect of governing, this book suggests that it has been prone to overestimate the degree to which our subjectivities are open to change. Combining ethnographic sensitivity with more traditional governmentality perspectives allows us to explore how governing attempts 'land' in the terrain targeted —human subjectivity—in actual social contexts, under specific forms of governing and rationality. In doing so, the book makes a distinctive contribution to a second generation of governmentality studies. It will appeal to social scientists with interests in governance, governmentality, social policy and the sociology of work.

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Contemporary Times

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Contents

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Preface

Some books are of more a pleasure to write than others. This book is one of those. The initial idea for an edited volume on *Transforming Subjectivities* was developed in a collegial discussion at a kick-off with staff at the Department of Sociology and Work Science at the University of Gothenburg some years ago. Thanks to all that participated in that discussion! A conceptual paper and a call for abstracts were then developed by us (editors), based on which the chapters of this volume took form. Working on this book has been a truly collaborative work and our names (as editors) are listed in alphabetical order.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the chapters as much as we enjoyed writing them!

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Cecilia Hansen Löfstrand and Kerstin Jacobsson
Göteborg
2 May 2022

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1 Introduction

Transforming Subjectivities

Cecilia Hansen Löfstrand and Kerstin Jacobsson

Our subjectivities—how we understand and feel about ourselves and the world around us—are the topic of much debate in popular as well as scientific discourses. Our time is characterized by a desire to be unique, while we are simultaneously all dependent on the vocabularies made available to us by contemporary discourses, by which we come to understand ourselves through our efforts to attain self-knowledge and self-improvement. Clearly, our subjectivity is not only a private matter, but also a target for intervention by authorities of all kinds. Contemporary societal trends such as the responsibilization and personalization of social and health care (e.g. Juhila et al. 2017), the medicalization and bio-medicalization of individual identities and self-understandings (e.g. Conrad 2007; Rose 2007) or the financialization of everyday life (e.g. Martin 2002; Clarke 2015) and the adherent regulatory and administrative practices target human subjectivity with the aim of transforming it. Without doubt, such trends mark our subjectivities, but to what extent and in what respects is human subjectivity malleable?

This volume addresses the complexity of human subjectivity formation in contemporary society in the light of current trends, with a particular focus on the *transformation of subjectivities*. The objective is to theorize processes of subject formation in contemporary times based on rich qualitative empirical material that enables a thorough analysis of the malleability of human subjectivity.

The argument is that the governmentality literature has produced an enormously inspiring and useful body of literature focusing on the *how* of governing (e.g. Rose 1989, 1999, 2007; Dean 2008); however, it has tended to overestimate the degree to which our subjectivities are open to change. Thus, the malleability of human subjectivity has been overestimated relative to such stabilizing forces as socialization or embodied habitus, and the relational production of (embodied) subjectivities (e.g., Butler 2005; cf. Rebughini 2014) been downplayed, we argue, because of relative inattention in the governmentality literature to the subjectivity formation of particular individuals in specific contexts. We especially recognize the limits

of focusing solely on governing programmes and practices based primarily on document (textual) analyses, if the goal is to explore the *transformation* of subjectivities. Therefore, to see how governing attempts 'land' in the terrain at which they are targeted—human subjectivity—in actual social contexts, under specific forms of governing and rationality, we draw on insights from both governmentality perspectives and ethnographies of institutional discourses.

Transforming subjectivities is hence also the term for a conceptual framework for a particular type of empirically based analysis of how various attempts at governing subjects are received by governed subjects, for example, clients, patients or employees. Whether subjects are easily (re)moulded and how they adapt or resist are considered empirical questions that can be answered by an analysis of qualitative—and often, but not exclusively, ethnographic—empirical materials. We echo the call by some previous authors for more ethnographic sensitivity in governmentality analysis and more attention to the subjects of governing and the actual processes of subject formation (e.g. Li 2007; Brady 2014, 2016), but aim to add even more nuance and complexity to the processes by which our subjectivities are shaped, calibrated, re-formatted and complexified in contemporary ways of 'governing the soul' (cf. Rose 1989).

First, we aim to address not only efforts to transform subjectivities but also some of the outcomes and consequences. This presupposes a clearer focus on 'before' and 'after' than is common in governmentality analysis by capturing *processes* of subject and subjectivity formation.

Second, because much focus in the governmentality tradition has been on government technologies and their rationalities rather than on how they are actually received by individuals, this has resulted in a paradoxical tendency to remain inattentive to the *subjective experiences* of governing attempts. In this volume, we allow a focus on governing techniques and discourses to encounter the study of lived experience in specific social settings. Close investigations of possible gaps between categories and other discursive templates, as well as (alternative ways of accounting for) lived experience, we suggest, are a fruitful path in the study of human subjectivity. So far, there are few detailed and nuanced empirical studies of how subjectivities emerge in social settings that address the malleability of human subjectivity.

Third, this volume provides empirically rich, mostly ethnographic-based case studies from a variety of social settings, capturing not only the subjectivity formation and transformation of clients and patients but also those of professionals.

In summary, through theoretical cross-fertilization of governmentality perspectives and ethnographies of institutional discourses, it is hoped this book will inspire a second generation of governmentality studies.

In the following, we reiterate some insights that we gain from the two literatures: governmentality perspectives and ethnographies of institutional discourses.

Subjectivity as target of transformation: Governmentality studies

Self and subjectivity as a site of intervention and target for transformation have been prominent in the tradition of governmentality studies. The governmentality approach provides a set of analytical tools for understanding and examining the exercise of power as 'the conduct of conduct' (Burchell et al. 1991; e.g. Foucault 1982, 1997). Consequently, it focuses on the practices, technologies, rationalities and knowledge involved in shaping the conduct of others (e.g. Gordon 1991; Dean 2008; Rose 1999; Bröckling et al. 2011; Walters 2012). In focus are all endeavours to shape, guide and direct the conduct of others, including more or less rational schemes, programmes, techniques and devices intended to achieve certain ends (Rose 1999). An essential analytical assumption of the governmentality approach is that it is the efforts, rationalities and practices involved in shaping the conduct of others 'that generate subjects in the first place' (Bröckling et al. 2011: 13). In this process, only some images of the self are invoked, while other possible images are excluded.

The work of the late Foucault (e.g. Foucault 1982, 1996, 1997, 2005) is a source of great inspiration for governmentality scholars, who draw particularly on his insights on the distinction and interplay between 'technologies of the self' (self-governance) and technologies for governing others. Importantly, from this perspective, power operates not just by subjection (domination), but also *through* subjects, by *subjectification*, that is, through processes of self-formation and self-constitution (e.g. Foucault 1982, 1996, 2005). Hence, the important insight from Foucault is consequently the active participation of individuals in this process by self-formation and 'work on the self' (e.g. practices of introspection, self-knowledge, self-monitoring, self-fashioning, self-improvement). Foucault highlights the active participation of individuals when explaining that:

> technologies of the self … permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.
>
> (Foucault 1997: 225)

As governmentality presupposes the active involvement of individuals, it acknowledges a certain degree of freedom, both on the side of those who aspire to govern and those individuals and collectives whose conduct is the target of that governance (Dean 2008; Walters 2012: 12). It represents a liberal approach to government. For Foucault, the concept of governmentality 'implies the relationship of the self to the self', and individuals are to some extent free to use a 'whole range of practices' and strategies in dealing with

themselves and others (Foucault 1997: 300; see also 1982). However, individuals and collectives are guided '*through* their freedom', that is, they are prompted to understand themselves as free subjects and (at the same time) to govern themselves (Bröckling et al. 2011: 13). Contemporary government operates delicately by infiltrating the ambitions of individuals, thus reaching 'into the very interior of our existence and experience as subjects' (Rose 1989: 11).

Consequently and usefully, governmentality analysis is concerned with *who* we are (or think we are) when we are governed: that is, our mode of subjectification (Foucault 1982; Dean 2008: 17). Key here is the categories by which individuals understand themselves and the knowledge about human beings on which they are based. Categories are performative in that they contribute to constituting and framing self-understandings, expectations and further actions. Categories shape individuals, a process that Hacking (1986) referred to as 'making up people'. It is in this sense that governmentality scholars speak of the creation or fabrication of subjects (e.g. Rose 2007: 110). Indeed, as Rose states: 'My analysis concerns not what human beings are, but what they think they are: the kind of human beings that they take themselves to be' (Rose 2007: 25).

In different times, places and settings, new configurations of knowledge, authority, technology and subjectivity emerge (Rose 2007: 104), providing new vocabularies through which individuals can understand and constitute themselves. For example, Rose has explored those in the 'psy professions' (e.g. psychology) and, more recently, neuroscience (Rose 2007) as 'experts on subjectivity', providing the knowledge by which people can understand themselves, thus contributing to the moulding of 'therapeutical selves' (Rose 1989) and now increasingly 'neuro-chemical selves' (Rose 2007). Government of the self in this context entails 'managed desires to reform and remake ourselves through calculated intervention in the name of our authenticity, self-realization and freedom' (Rose 2007: 105).

Researchers in this tradition commonly emphasize the *how* of governing (Foucault 1982; Rose 1989, 1999, 2007; Dean 2008). In practical terms, governmentality analysis typically involves an analysis of technologies and instruments (practices imbued with aspirations for the shaping of conduct), political rationalities (the programmatic character of tools to improve and maximize forces), and the discursive character of government: that is, knowledge, truth claims, conceptualizations, problem understandings and vocabularies, as well as work to shape our desires, aspirations, interests, beliefs and self-understanding (Rose 1999; see also Dean 2008; Walters 2012).

Governmentality-inspired studies have indeed shown that we are encouraged by 'experts on subjectivity' to regard our own and others' subjectivity as open and, in our terms, malleable. Accordingly, taking a governmentality approach to the study of self and subjectivity entails the notion of subjectivity as open to change and being transformed. However, in effect, scholars inspired by governmentality have focused much more on governing

techniques and considerably less on how efforts to shape the conduct of others have been received by subjects, than would perhaps be expected. For example, Rose (1999) presents the governmentality approach in the following manner:

> To analyse political power through the analytics of governmentality is not to start from the apparently obvious historical and sociological question: What happened and why? It is to start by asking what authorities of various sorts wanted to happen, in relation to problems defined how, in pursuit of which objectives, through what strategies and techniques.
>
> (1999: 20)

The focus of this approach is on governing practices rather than on the subjects of governing and their concerns. While Rose (1999: 21) recognizes both programmes and failures, acts as well as counter-acts, he seldom delves into the counter-acts or resistance. Similarly, Dean (2008) recognizes that the outcomes or effects of governing are 'relatively unpredictable' (11) and that the practices of the self are instruments in the pursuit of political, economic and social ends as well as means of resistance (2008: 13). Nevertheless, Dean (2008) chooses to focus on 'practices concerned to conduct the conduct of others rather than those concerned to conduct one's own conduct' (13). Bröckling et al. (2011) argue that the focus in governmentality studies 'is on the interrelations between regimes of self-government and techniques of controlling and shaping the conduct of individuals and collectives, not on what human beings governed by these regimes and technologies actually say and do' (13).

In this volume, however, we take a particular interest in the question of how resonant individuals are with governing practices and the aspirations of others by addressing the question of how mouldable subjects are in various contexts and settings. To that extent, we take the side of authors criticizing the lack of attention to the subjects of governing in the governmentality literature and studies. For instance, Newton (1998) called for taking the agency of subjects in relation to discourse seriously, as well as exploring its manifold implications (Newton 1998). The lack of attention to 'actual people' and the 'actual processes' of subject formation have been addressed by Brady (2014, 2016), who argued that 'ethnographies of governmentalities' can offer a finer-grained picture.[1] Similarly, anthropologist Tania Li (2007) called for a research agenda involving the ethnographic study of concrete governing attempts, whilst acknowledging individual and collective creativity. She argued:

> The reluctance of scholars exploring governmental rationalities to conduct empirical studies of particular conjunctures introduces an odd inconsistency in their work: *an interest in politics as a hypothetical possibility*

that is not carried into an interest in politics as a concrete practice. Nikolas Rose, for example, argues for the study of governmental rationalities and against what he calls sociologies of rule – studies of the ways in which rule is actually accomplished, and the messy and often unintended outcomes of governmental programs as they are applied in practice.

(Li 2007: 279, italics added)

We argue that governmentality research has tended to overestimate the malleability of human subjectivity precisely because of this inattention to how governing techniques play out in authentic settings, including the subjectivity formation of actual individuals. This approach entails recognizing the limits that a sole focus on governing programmes and practices based primarily on document (textual) analyses brings when the goal is to explore the transformation of subjectivity.

In fact, as Rose (1999) has argued, existing governmentality studies show that spaces of government are shaped not by one but by several discourses (22), so subjects are always shaped and intersected by several discourses. Such competing modes of subjectification may open a space for resisting subject positions encouraged by authorities of various kinds. Moreover, different individuals may respond quite differently and to varying degrees be prone to accepting the subject positions and subjectivity ideals offered to them (e.g. Sunnerfjell & Jacobsson 2018). To see how governing attempts 'land' in the terrain at which they are targeted—human subjectivity—in specific social contexts, under specific forms of governing, it is useful to combine insights from governmentality perspectives with ethnographies of institutional discourses (e.g. Gubrium & Holstein 2001, 2008).

The study of adapting and resisting selves in social settings: Ethnographies of institutional discourse

Ethnographies of institutional discourse is an analytical framework enabling ethnographers, or more broadly, qualitatively oriented social scientists conducting field research and interviews, to consider discursive and narrative aspects of lived experience as accounted for in a variety of specific settings. It starts from the notion of talk being 'inextricably intertwined' with social settings (Miller 1994: 280) and combines observations of everyday life with detailed analyses of naturally occurring conversations and the study of knowledge production in social settings. Institutional discourses are the 'fundamental assumptions, concerns and vocabularies of members of settings and their usual ways of interacting with each other' (Miller 1994: 282–283). As such, institutional discourses are 'shared and standardized frameworks for anticipating, acting in and reflecting on social settings and interactions' (Miller 1994: 283). Taken together, social settings and institutional discourses are 'conditions of possibility for reality construction' (Miller 1994: 283) or conditions of possibility for the creation and re-creation of subjectivity.

The term 'institution' refers to conventions or types of social practices associated with a setting, observable through the recurring activities of its members by which social settings, relationships and (inter-)subjective realities are constructed and reproduced (Miller 1994: 287). Institutions are observable 'situated conventions' that ethnographers, for example, take as signs of abstract structures or formal organization (Miller 1994: 288). Ways of talking, writing and interacting in a social setting depend on setting specific practical and interpretative conventions that have their own logic (Miller 1994: 293).

In social settings, power is exercised and dominance achieved by producing 'discursive dominance', that is, by making some ways of talking and interacting available and other ways of assessing or orienting people towards each other seen inappropriate or undesirable. Therefore, setting members—such as employers and employees or professional helpers and clients—may resist more or less overt demands that they act responsibly and appropriately by acting in ways perceived to be 'uncooperative, defiant or in other ways inappropriate' (Miller 1994: 284). Setting members who resist dominant discourses also draw on resources available in the setting. Therefore, an act of resistance cannot 'be separated from the discursive contexts within which it is produced', and authorities in settings may respond to resistance in ways that still 'sustain organizationally preferred positions, relationships and realities' (Miller 1994: 284). In every social setting, there is a hierarchy of institutional discourses (Miller 1994: 299), which does not necessarily mean that the dominant discourse is hegemonic. As qualitative social scientists or ethnographers, we must look for gaps, discontinuities and contradictions that may be signs of alternative or subjugated discourses (Miller 1994: 300) drawn on by subjects of government to express resistance. In different times, places and settings, under certain conditions, alternative discourses are taken seriously by setting members.

The important insight we take from ethnographies of institutional discourse is that subjective senses of self always 'reflect the circumstances under which self-interpretation takes place', meaning that 'culturally endorsed formats' are drawn on in self-formation processes (Gubrium & Holstein 2001: 9). However, arguably 'the self emanates from the *interplay* between circumstantial demands, restraints, and resources, on one hand, and self-constituting social actions on the other' (Gubrium & Holstein 2001: 9). Letting this approach cross-fertilize the governmentality approach allows us to see how enactments of institutional discourses and the production of knowledge, power and resistance play out in particular settings, when—importantly—they encounter the lived experience of individuals and collectives. This approach, it is argued, helps to 'complicate' and add nuance to the ways in which our subjectivities are calibrated, re-formatted and complexified in specific settings under specific knowledge regimes and contemporary ways of governing our 'selves'.

We share the view that lived experience and subjectivity are inextricably linked (Biehl et al. 2007). In different social settings, subjectivities emerge

and transform through collective and individual experiences. As shown by Terkelsen (2009), subjects are not passively formed or produced as such, but reproduce and change themselves in social settings and in and through social interactions (Biehl et al. 2007; Terkelsen 2009). Experience and subjectivity are both *inter*subjective phenomena: that is, subjective and collective processes fuse and condition each other (Kleinman & Fitz-Henry 2007; Terkelsen 2009).

As illustrated by the chapters in this book, studies of lived experience in social settings, enactments of institutional discourses and the production of knowledge, power and resistance in social settings reflect how subjectivities are shaped and transformed (or possibly not). As pointed out by Terkelsen (2009), a focus on *everyday subjective experience* in specific settings reveals 'how subjectivities emerge, are shaped and reshaped through a flow of multiple, diverse and sometimes paradoxical everyday experiences' (4). Nevertheless, there are few detailed and nuanced studies of how subjectivities emerge in social settings, addressing empirically the malleability of human subjectivity.

Thus, experiences, as known through the stories we tell about ourselves (to ourselves and to others), are shaped by environments or social settings. Gubrium and Holstein (2008: 251) therefore suggest a narrative ethnography approach. To understand the meaning of stories, one must explore not only the content and internal logic of the narrative itself, but also the varied circumstances under which stories are told, that is, 'the circumstances of their production and reception' or their 'narrative environments' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 252). In line with this approach, studying transformations of subjectivity in everyday settings means analysing 'the narrative practices of those whose experiences and lives are under consideration' to understand both the meaning of their stories and 'the relation of [their] stories to the worlds in which they circulate' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 252). Social settings function as narrative environments, and each social setting 'affirms certain established stories and ways of narrating experience', and in that sense 'privilege particular accounts for institutional purposes', whereas counter narratives tend to become 'marginalized, "repaired," or otherwise challenged' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 253).

For example, Loseke shows how culturally standardized images of battered women shape the institutional thinking, interaction and processes of assessment at a shelter for battered women (Miller 1994: 293). Loseke (2001) uses the concept of 'formula stories', defined as 'templates for how lived experience may be defined' that people tend to use 'to make sense of their lives and experiences' (107). However, formula stories honour 'only some types of experiences' (Loseke 2001: 121) and lived experience 'has a way of resisting formulaic presentations' (Loseke 2001: 108). Close investigations of possible gaps between categories provided by formula stories, other discursive templates and (alternative ways of accounting for) lived experience may be a fruitful path in the study of human subjectivity if one takes an interest in the malleability of human subjectivity, as we do in this book.

Introduction to the volume

We share with the governmentality approach the analytical assumption that power operates not just by subjection (as domination), but also *through* subjects, by subjectification and through processes of self-formation and self-constitution (e.g. Foucault 1982, 1996, 2005). We also share the assumption that it is the efforts, rationalities and practices involved in the shaping of the conduct of others 'that generate subjects in the first place' (Bröckling et al. 2011: 13). This is a process in which some images of the self are invoked, while other possible images of the self are excluded. However, we keep in mind that while the subjective sense of self is shaped by the conduct of others and in that sense always 'reflect the circumstances under which self-interpretation takes place', it always simultaneously relies on the 'self-constituting social actions' of the subjects themselves (Gubrium & Holstein 2001: 9). This book takes a particular interest in the question of how resonant we really are with the governing practices and the aspirations of others; indeed, how mouldable are we as subjects? The chapter in this book consequently focuses more on and theorizes about the *processes* of subject- and subjectivity-formation as they unfold in specific social and organizational settings, also discussing some of the outcomes of these processes. Whether subjects are easily '(re)moulded' or not, and how they adapt or offer resistance are considered empirical questions that can be answered by an analysis of qualitative—and often, but not exclusively, ethnographic—empirical materials.

Chapter outline

In Chapter 2, *A Brighter Future? The Transformative Power of Models in Social Services*, Lovisa Näslund and Renita Thedvall focus on the effect on social workers of models used in social work practice, as the workers use them to transform their clients. From a governance perspective, human dispositions are manageable potentialities, so models have the capacity to transform subjectivities through their potential to control the mindset or mentality of social workers and clients. Through an ethnographic study, the authors explore how the Globe model, intended to be a roadmap to client self-sufficiency, was developed and used, as well as how and to what extent it shaped the social workers' self-understandings and work practices. The authors show that the Globe model initially sparked hope and reduced stress among social workers by making their workload seem more manageable, but over time it evolved into a tool to increase their efficiency and client progress, thus becoming a tool to control the social workers' 'output'. The authors conclude that models function to some extent as technologies of governmentality and transform the subjectivities of those subjected to them. However, their nuanced studies of specific work practices reveal that human subjectivities are less malleable than one may perhaps assume.

In Chapter 3, *Shaping Caseworker Subjectivity in Social Insurance Agencies*, Kerstin Jacobsson investigates the role of organizational narratives and storytelling in shaping caseworker subjectivities by 'storying' their experience and signalling appropriate ways of being a caseworker. In her ethnographic study of narrative occasions such as staff and teamwork meetings, in combination with individual caseworker interviews, Jacobsson shows that organizational narratives are key in the process of shaping caseworker subjectivities. The political goals, Directors General and internal management styles of Swedish Social Insurance Agencies have shifted dramatically, with each shift accompanied by shifts in legitimizing narratives, including the need to confess to past bad practices. Jacobsson analyses in detail the collective and interactional processes involved in the storying of individual experience and, thus, in shaping caseworker subjectivities. Narratives not only shape organizational priorities and ways of relating to clients and case management but also what caseworkers felt to be satisfying and rewarding at work, and the self-improvement sought at work. The author concludes that empirically and theoretically, it is in the interplay between organizational narratives (including accompanying discursive templates of a caseworker) and individual experience that subjectivities—the caseworkers' views of themselves and the world—are produced. However, the fact that the caseworker subjectivities were found to be malleable does not mean they are completely fabricated by the will of others. As also noted in Chapter 2, more experienced caseworkers showed greater ambivalence in relation to new managerial trends.

In Chapter 4, *Swedish Police Reform and the Emergence of New Police Subjectivities*, Bertil Rolandsson points out that as public officials, police officers must govern themselves in relation not only to managerial rationalities but also to the public they serve. Swedish Police Reform was intended to improve the Swedish Police Authority's ability to respond to the needs expressed by local communities and move the police closer to the citizens. Based on individual interviews with police officers several years after the reform, Rolandsson explores how the new toolbox for this purpose, intended to make the police authority more sensitive to local problems, functions in practice. He illustrates local police officers' creativity and concerns in relation to local collaboration with other public authorities and citizens, including officers' feelings in response to others' expectations, and highlights variations in their self-conceptions as strategizing subjects. Rolandsson shows that police officers with extensive and event-driven workloads needed to take local concerns seriously while avoiding promising the general public too much. The reform and its accompanying managerial tools, in a sense, thus fostered more apprehensive or even anxious police subjects. Thus, a new and strategic police subjectivity emerged. Officers' own approaches to feelings of anxiety differed, and the author identifies cynical and more pragmatic police subjects; however, both groups were concerned about the possibility of 'failing' in the eyes of citizens.

In Chapter 5, *Negotiating Subjectivities in Social Work Dialogues*, Johan Lindwall discusses changes in social work practices, the move from past authoritarian tendencies to current ideals of client-centredness and dialogue. In this change, the will of the client becomes the primary intervention site. However, Lindwall indicates, state-sanctioned social work always entails a mission to discourage certain behaviours by clients. The main dilemma of social workers in contemporary times thus concerns adjusting their clients to the institutional rationality without subjection (domination). Instead, subjectification, or work that aligns with clients' subjectivities and their will, has become the new ideal. Lindwall draws on a larger ethnographic study, including recorded dialogues between workers and clients they categorize as having substance use problems. The chapter describes a confessional discourse; clients ideally confess to substance use problems. Lindwall sheds light on the power dimensions in social work based on ideals of dialogues between 'equals'. He finds that these dialogues are highly controlling through the use of subtle, highly elusive means of shaping client subjectivities by targeting their desires and aspirations. Furthermore, he shows that dialogue-based social work results in negotiations of both client and social worker subjectivities. Nevertheless, there are limits to the malleability of clients, who resisted characterizations of themselves. While social workers aspired to idealized facilitator subjectivity, they also sometimes resisted it by applying more authoritarian means of control. Hence, while both client and social worker subjectivities are malleable, there are limits.

In Chapter 6, *Subjectification, Advice Giving and Resistance in Mental Health Home Visit Interaction*, Kirsi Juhila and Cecilia Hansen Löfstrand depart from the deinstitutionalization of mental health care as a pervasive policy trend in the global North. Deinstitutionalization has entailed changes in professional care delivery systems, from care in large treatment institutions to community care and—more recently—to professional care provision in the homes of clients and patients. Juhila and Hansen Löfstrand explore new technologies for governing the conduct of clients in their homes by home visits, focusing on worker–client interactions and dialogues. In the context of mental health care and support work, home visits target clients' subjectivity and operate through subjectification, that is, through clients' own processes of self-constitution and self-formation. The chapter demonstrates how subjectification is initiated and attempts are made to strengthen the self-governance of clients in institutionally preferred manners during home visits. Drawing on ethnographic data from worker–client dialogues during home visits to clients, the authors focus on workers' advice-giving and client responses, including resistance to investigate what subject positions are encouraged and whether they are accepted or resisted, and consequently how resonant and malleable clients are, to governance by mental health care and support workers. The authors found that clients occasionally accepted advice and strengthened their self-governance as suggested, but clients also demonstrated resistance in several ways. They asserted their

own knowledge of norms, that is, their competence and self-knowledge, agreeing with the workers' recommended course of action but disagreeing about how to achieve it. In instances of overt resistance, the clients questioned the relevance of the recommendations. The authors conclude that advice-giving and responses, including resistance, are integral to subjectification processes. While self-knowledgeable subjects are produced in the process, the institutionally preferred self-governance of mental health care clients may not always be achieved.

In Chapter 7, *Transforming Industrial Subjectivity? Scenes from a Youth Activation Centre*, Jon Sunnerfjell investigates the implications of European activation policies intended to assist individuals in developing new personal qualities on the road to self-sufficiency in a local Swedish community. To achieve this, Sunnerfjell draws on ethnographic observations in a youth activation centre in a Swedish former industrial community, to explore attempts at transforming the problematized 'industrial mentality' that allegedly characterizes the community. The activation centre targeting youths who were neither working nor in education, relied on project funding from the European Social Fund (ESF). Based on observations, field notes were produced on interactions between the coaches and youths, as well as the joint action of defining the situation. The chapter focuses on the responses of youths at the centre to interventions aimed at transforming their subjectivity. Sunnerfjell illustrates attempts at fostering 'the active subject' and—seemingly paradoxically—also 'the disabled subject'. In one of the two projects investigated, the coaches encouraged the participating youths to understand themselves in light of a neurobiological truth discourse. Sunnerfjell found that the first project tended to reproduce rather than transform the 'industrial mentality', while the second project tended to use neurobiological diagnoses (or suspicions thereof) to help the targeted youths enter the labour market by way of wage subsidies. However, the chapter also depicts resistance on the part of the young people to such neurobiological subjection. Overall, the chapter illustrates that large scale—in this case, European—activation policies are always translated into local implementation and the government of subjects is always subject to rupture and resistance.

In Chapter 8, *The Problematizing and Counter-Conducting Subjects of Financial Education*, Jane Pettersson reports the findings from a study of a financial education course on pension and insurance provided by the *Like Your Personal Finance* financial education network co-ordinated by the Swedish Financial Supervisory Authority, with the overall goal of achieving financially self-confident citizens. Pettersson illustrates how financial education involves attempts at fostering financially savvy and self-reliant subjects. The chapter aims to produce knowledge about how governance attempts are received by course attendees, that is, how they (re)acted to what they were taught about financial savviness and attempts to transform them into good financial subjects. As Pettersson points out, successful governance produces subjects who voluntarily subjugate themselves to the will of another and

conduct themselves accordingly. However, in everyday life, human beings recurrently problematize, that is, reflect on their own troubles, concerns and experiences. Pettersson draws on the concept of problematizations to account for the rationalities that course participants express in relation to central 'rules of thumb' taught by course conveners and lecturers, and the concept of counter-conduct to understand any signs of refusal to let themselves be conducted according to the will of others. The analysis is based on an ethnographic study of a course offered for union representatives at their respective workplaces. Pettersson found that while in interviews, the course participants reported being pleased with the course and echoed its main messages, in practice—when relating their own practices and considerations of the course content—they instead reported making informed choices *not* to follow the advice received, with which they had discursively agreed on a general level. The course participants, thus, appear to be knowledgeable subjects, that is, they knew how they were ideally supposed to proceed to be a financially savvy subjects but took own experiences and concerns into account, resulting in counter-conduct. Pettersson concludes that as subjects, the course participants were not that malleable; rather than remoulding themselves, participants remoulded the ideal of financial savviness to fit their own lives and (experience-based) subjectivity.

In Chapter 9, *State-Sanctioned Educational Initiatives Aimed at Transforming Adult Immigrants. Interpretation, Negotiation and Resistance*, Marie Carlson and Nanna Gillberg investigate state-sanctioned education for adult immigrants, the fundamental aim of which is to inform and transform targeted individuals. More specifically, the authors investigate how the project of transforming adult immigrants into good citizens and labour market participants was articulated in two courses—one in Swedish for immigrants and one in civic orientation—and how these articulations related to the self-understandings of those engaged in this education: professionals and course participants. The desired result was to create active, capable and self-reliant individuals, following prescribed paths, by internalizing the course content into their self-understandings. Drawing on a policy ethnographic approach, focusing on the relationship between policy and practice and, thus, the transformation of policies into educational practices, the authors analyse salient narratives of resistance and re-negotiation among professionals and immigrant course participants. Course participants and educators alike criticized the Swedish employment services and labour market as well as the devaluation and low expectations of immigrants generally expressed in the courses, the materials and the Swedish approach to immigrants. The staff turnover rate was high and governing often resulted in resignation and passivity among both professionals and immigrants, just as often as it produced the desired malleability of subjects. In a sense, resignation entails malleability and there is a kind of self-formation that entails compliance with regulations, rules and incentive structures; however, compliance was not voluntary and did not reflect the personal beliefs of the hired professionals.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, Cecilia Hansen Löfstrand and Kerstin Jacobsson draw some general conclusions on the governance of individuals and the malleability of human subjectivity, based on the contributions in this volume.

Note

1 In his response, Dean criticized Brady for using a realist language at odds with Foucault's nominalism. He argued that Foucault 'seeks not the real, but the effects in the real of how we think about and "name" the real (…) *Foucault is not seeking to access the complexity of everyday life* but the conditions under which we form a knowledge and seek to govern such domains as everyday life' (Dean 2015: 359, italics added). However, an interest in the reception of government attempts by particular subjects is fully compatible with an interest in people's understanding and formation of themselves.

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2   A Brighter Future?

The Transformative Power of Models in Social Services

Lovisa Näslund and Renita Thedvall

Introduction

A core tenet of social work is that clients should be helped to work on themselves so they can improve their lives and their abilities to a point where they are no longer reliant on social services for support. To make this possible, social workers have different models at their disposal. While the clients are ostensibly governed by these techniques, models of social work also shape the subjectivities of the social workers applying them. In this chapter, our focus is on the effect of these models on social workers, as they seek to use these models to transform their clients.

The use of models to transform subjectivities is based on the idea that humans are projects to be created. This idea also conceptualises humans as manageable potentialities, that is, not just their bodies but also their dispositions can be managed (Martin, 1997). The notion of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) highlights how political technologies (Foucault, 1988) such as models are internalised in individuals' minds, carrying certain norms and ideas that then become shared and indisputable. When norms and ideas become internalised, governance is exercised by control of the mind frame or mentality, rather than by fear of punishment. This power is not based on prohibition but rather on the formation of selves who can manage a kind of regulated freedom (Rose & Miller 1992). Social work is intrinsically linked to governmentality and the 'fabrication of subjects', providing techniques for the 'desires to reform and remake ourselves through calculated intervention' (Rose 2007:105).

This chapter is based on an ethnographic study of the development and use of the Globe model at a social services office. The Globe model instrument was developed to provide guidance and efficiency for social assistance. Its purpose was to provide a roadmap to self-sufficiency, from first contact to the final step of finding a sustainable, independent means of income. It was used both internally at the social services office to help inexperienced social workers understand the practices and work processes and in client meetings, in the hope of motivating the client by providing a roadmap to a brighter future.

The ethnographic approach allows for a more nuanced exploration of how governmentality technology is received by those subjected to it, such as the social workers in this case. More specifically, the approach allows exploration of how individual differences in terms of frames of reference and professional identities filter interpretation and thereby the capacity of the model to transform subjectivities. In this way, we seek to investigate the impact of instruments of governmentality on individuals and what shapes this impact on the organisational and individual levels. Specifically, we consider the role of the models in shaping the workers' understanding, work practices and themselves as social workers.

In the following section, we begin by describing our study methods and give a brief overview of work at the social assistance benefits unit. We then move to the Globe model, and how it was developed and used in the social services office. We conclude with a discussion on the effects of the model on the subjectivities of the social workers.

Method

This chapter is based on data from an ethnographic study, including participant observation, interviews and document studies in and of the Swedish Social Services, more specifically social assistance within the municipality of Stockholm.[1] Social assistance was typically an entry-level position for social service workers after completing their training. In Stockholm, as in other municipalities, this fact and the taxing work environment contributed to a high staff turnover. In one office in the municipality, more than half of the staff had changed within a year. In another office, a social worker explained that having been in the office for three years, she was one of the most experienced workers. Most social workers we encountered had not held their current position for more than a year, although they may have been at their social services office longer in other positions.

Social work is pervaded by a range of knowledge models for how to perform it. For example, in social assistance benefits, motivational interviewing (MI) was proposed as a tool for client interviews (see also Chapter 5, this volume). There were also models for what questions to ask clients to determine their right to social assistance and their ability to work and find employment, such as Initial Assessment (for more details, see Thedvall 2019) and *Förutsättningar inför arbete* (FIA, i.e. 'abilities for the workplace') (Socialstyrelsen 2017). These assessment and mapping models were intended to help social workers and clients understand the client's situation and chances of finding employment. This chapter focuses on one such model in use at the social services office: the Globe model. This model differed from the others that we encountered in that it was developed by social service workers in a social services office. Therefore, it is an example of the systematisation and modelling of experience-based knowledge by practitioners.

This chapter is part of a larger project to investigate the use of different knowledge models and instruments and their effects on the working environment of social services. The research is based on participant observation, interviews and document studies. From October 2016 to February 2019, we performed recurring participant observation, in what Sandler and Thedvall (2017) called meeting ethnography in network meetings[2] (49 hours), and workplace education meetings[3] (34 hours) in a municipality. We also spent eight weeks conducting fieldwork in one social services office in selected weeks between March 2017 and February 2019. The intention of this design was to allow a longitudinal study of ongoing processes. At the office, we attended a variety of meetings[4] (75 hours) to understand the social services sector, in general and social assistance work, in particular. In addition, 7 administrators at the central administration in the municipality, 2 in a municipality R&D department and 29 social workers (including 2 heads of units and 2 deputy heads of units) were interviewed. We also studied the digital system used in the office and documentation on the Globe model, the National Board for Health and Welfare manual for social assistance benefits, the municipality's guidelines for social assistance benefits, the Initial Assessment working method documents, the FIA manual and the record-keeping system.

Work at the Social Assistance Benefits Unit

While social services in Sweden cover a wide variety of responsibilities, the focus of this study is on social assistance benefits. Social assistance benefit units support those who cannot support themselves in any other way. These clients were required to apply for assistance on a monthly basis. A decision was required each month on whether they had done what they could to find other means of support and whether their economic situation qualified them for social assistance benefits. The assistance granted was a bare minimum: for example, if the client needed dental treatment, new glasses or new winter clothes for their children, they had to apply for extra assistance and another decision needed to be made. To assess whether clients had done everything in their power to support themselves in another way, each client was supposed to have a 'change plan', which is an agreement between the client and their assigned social worker on what the client would do the following month to bring them closer to employment or sickness compensation. If the client had deviated from this plan to the extent that they forfeited their right to assistance, their application would be rejected. The social workers in the office, where we conducted fieldwork were assigned about 35–45 clients (depending on the experience and efficiency of the social worker, and how 'onerous' their clients were deemed to be), who applied for renewed assistance every month. The social worker must determine whether they had fulfilled their obligations and satisfied the criteria for social assistance benefits. In addition,

because social services are a governmental body, it was of vital importance that all clients were treated equally and granted or refused assistance similarly regardless of the social worker to whom they were assigned. Social workers were expected to make individual assessments, as change plans and assessments of whether a specific change plan had been followed should not be boilerplate but rather adapted to the abilities and overall situation of the individual client.

Decision-making in social assistance benefits thus required two types of information: (a) the general rules and guidelines for a given client situation to ensure equal treatment and (b) information on the individual client to create the change plan and evaluate whether it had been followed.

Modelling Social Work(ers)

The purpose of the Globe model was to visualise the roadmap to self-sufficiency for both clients and social workers. It was also intended to show the measures and support available at different stages of the process, as we see below. For the clients, the Globe model was presented in the form of 'the process arrow', wherein the journey from first contact to financial self-sufficiency was divided into six steps, each illustrated by a suitable pictogram (e.g. a handshake to illustrate the meeting between social worker and client), arranged to form an arrow pointing forward.

The process arrow was used to clarify that the clients' goal was to become self-sufficient. Often, long-term clients were under the impression that the social services office was their final destination and they would remain on benefits for the foreseeable future. The manager explained that this was a fallacy because benefits are only meant to be a temporary solution until the goal of self-sufficiency is reached. As the process arrow made very clear, being a client of the social assistance benefits unit should not be a permanent situation. Furthermore, the process arrow clarified the roadmap of the steps ahead before the goal of self-sufficiency was reached, as a deputy head of the unit explained:

> Well, there is a big advantage of collecting everything we have to offer. 'What is it that we do?' And also, it becomes clear to clients and collaborative partners that this is what it looks like. This is your road to self-sufficiency, now… this arrow that we use in client meetings. It becomes clear and structured. You've painted a picture and explained in comprehensible terms what going through this process can entail: becoming eligible for social assistance benefits and then coming out at the other side and being self-sufficient again. What steps do we take? Because that hasn't really been done before, in this way. That's what I think is the big benefit of it, and the effects using it has.
>
> (Deputy Head of Unit, 24 January 2017)

Step 1 represents the 'telephone interview assessment' conducted during reception (by a different unit). At this stage, the client was asked for information, such as their name, identification number, civil status, living conditions, residence permit, reasons for applying, number of children, employment situation, possible health insurance and financial situation of the household (other benefits and sources of income, possible assets that may be sold), to determine whether the person was entitled to social assistance benefits, had applied to the right social services office and had exhausted all other possible means of supporting themselves.

In Step 2, clients were assigned a social worker and met them. This social worker investigated and mapped the client's needs to identify the underlying reasons for their need for social assistance benefits that temporarily prevented self-sufficiency. This would concern their employability in terms of education, previous employment, internships or work training. Furthermore, the worker assessed their physical and mental health, including possible addiction issues, and their social network and family situation (e.g. responsibility for children or domestic abuse). The purpose here was to identify any factors that would reduce their ability to find employment. This step concluded with an agreement on short- and long-term goals for the client.

Step 3 represented the 'change plan', which was designed for clients who had been on benefits for more than three months. Clients who became financially self-sufficient before the three-month mark left the social services, in effect moving directly to step 6 from step 2. For those who stayed on, step 3 focused on change and what the client wanted to achieve. The client would be asked to envision their self-sufficiency and the benefits it would entail. A plan would then be created, which described the actions required to reach this goal and the steps to take, as well as mapping possible obstacles with a plan to overcome them. The client also had to conduct a self-assessment of their ability to be self-supporting within three months. The client and social worker would then agree on this joint plan and the steps each would take to reach the goal. Clients who failed to make the required efforts might lose their right to social assistance benefits, as the model (and social services, in general) emphasised 'help to self-help': that is, the client was and should be responsible for their own situation. Therefore, the clients must continuously show that they were actively working to achieve self-sufficiency to maintain their benefits.

Step 4 represented collaboration. There may be a need for contact with parties such as the health-care system to treat or assess physical and mental health issues, other parts of the social services to address addiction problems, or the job centre to work towards employment. The Swedish welfare state is firmly rooted in the idea of employment as the norm. From this perspective, those living off the state through social assistance should be the exception. In later years, particularly since the revival of 'the work line' (in Swedish, *arbetslinjen*) with the incoming conservative–liberal government of 2006, the norm of employment has been further emphasised to also include

those who are considered to be 'far from' the labour market: that is, the sick, those with physical and mental disabilities, those lacking experience and skills, the recovering addicts—who should all be investigated and tested to determine whether they had some ability to work. This terminology—'far from the labour market'—also stresses that although these clients may currently have no possibility of employment, they could gain it with proper help. Achieving this task was the purpose of the job centres. These were placed at the municipal level in contrast to the Swedish public employment agency, which is a state agency that manages employment agencies throughout Sweden. The Swedish public employment agency, in addition to job placement, offers counselling, work-related rehabilitation and enrolment in labour market programmes. In short, it ensures that people receiving unemployment benefits are at the disposal of the labour market. In contrast, the municipal job centres worked solely with long-term unemployed who were 'far from the labour market', with the help of job coaches, job matchers and a number of programmes and measures intended to cater to their needs. In most cases, the idea was that clients would be referred to the job centre at some point, so that a plan could be drawn up to attain self-sufficiency through employment.

Step 5 represented 'interventions' (In Swedish, *insats*). These were often in the form of job programmes for clients who were unlikely to find employment on the regular labour market. However, there could also be other measures to help clients address their problems and improve their life situation. This could involve an investigation of whether the client had a neuropsychiatric condition such as attention deficit–hyperactivity disorder, or other diagnoses that affected their mental or physical abilities, practical support in the home or rehabilitation from addiction.

Step 6 represented financial self-sufficiency, which could be achieved through measures such as employment, education, social insurance benefits or unemployment benefits. This was the end goal for all clients. A metaphor we encountered was that social services should not be so much a safety net but a trampoline, catapulting those who fall down back to self-sufficiency and a sustainable life situation.

The process arrow was based on an ideal model of how clients should move through the system. In reality, many clients had spent many years on social assistance benefits moving between social workers and changing their plans and interventions. The movement and progress with a definite goal in sight suggested by the arrow was therefore a key part of the model, intended to counter any impression by clients (and jaded social workers) that social services was a long-term solution. This also relates to the trampoline metaphor: that is, there is only one direction in the process and there are six neat steps to move through, with self-sufficiency being the inevitable and attainable goal. The process arrow, with its clear imagery and ideograms, is also how the clients would typically encounter the Globe model.

For the social workers, however, the Globe model was also presented in a more complex form: 'the process support'. This was a much more text-heavy

model, with no arrows or pictograms, but rather a somewhat complicated table listing different steps, what parts of the social services were involved in them, and also all the interventions, tasks and tools available to social workers at each step of the way. (The first step, 'the reception' (*Mottagningen*) from the process arrow, was not included in this model because this took place in a different unit). Because of the precarious situation of many clients, social work in practice often focused on 'putting out fires' to ensure that clients had food on their tables and a roof over their heads or investigating whether costs such as dental work or a new winter coat for the children should be covered by social services. The longer-term aspect of social work, ensuring clients' life situations changed so that they would become self-sufficient, often fell by the wayside as a consequence of the number of clients assigned to each social worker, whose monthly applications for renewed assistance must be assessed and judged.

The idea behind the Globe model was that the social worker should choose a number of clients, 'focus clients', which was initially around 6, but gradually increased to 15. The reason for the focus client system was that it often seemed to be an overwhelming and hopeless task to work with all 45 clients on their list, all with complex and long-running problems. Choosing a focus group made the task more manageable and the effects of their efforts more visible. However, this system also inevitably highlighted that although social services were supposed to work as a trampoline for all clients, this was not the case in practice. Instead, clients would spend years and years with the social services with no or ineffective interventions and support to address their problems. If anything, following the long-term effects of poverty on health and happiness, they may over time drift further from the goal of self-sufficiency and employment.

The second step, the mapping phase, was decidedly more complex here than in the process arrow. Going through the records of the clients to map their situation in concordance with the model was often a time-consuming undertaking, particularly because the digital system used for these records did not easily lend itself to this task, so this was only thoroughly done with focus clients. As one social worker put it, when the deputy unit head suggested to him that a specific client should maybe become a focus client:

> Yes, but it will be a damn painful mapping because he has been here since 1997.
>
> (Case processing meeting, 1 November 2017)

The reason mapping was needed was partly because of the cumbersome digital record-keeping system, wherein each entry became its own document, which added up to hundreds of notes stacked chronologically over the years. As clients would regularly change social workers, the quickest solution was often to ask the client for their history rather than looking at the records. This meant that long-term clients were often asked to retell their story innumerable times, becoming living record keepers of their own cases.

With the Globe model, we map all our clients. It means that I order all the files of that client from the record-keeping office, then I go through them and read all the journal entries, and then I write it down.
(Social worker, 11 October 2017)

The mapping was thus intended to result in a handy summary of the most relevant data from the records, which could henceforth be used by all social workers assigned to the client. The actual process of a client would typically not follow the neat and orderly steps of the process arrow, but rather be a patchwork created over many years and many social workers. The mapping was also intended to bring order to this and identify missing pieces:

This client has been with us for quite a long time, and it is six pages long. When we went through it, we realised there was no assessment of the ability to work and no medical assessment.
(Deputy head of unit at workshop on the Globe model,
6 December 2016)

[The Globe model] is for all types of clients. [...] The person you are describing, for example, has complex problems. We may have tried a lot of interventions before, and it has turned out that no, it doesn't work; this person is too ill. Then we need to show in the mapping all the things we've tried and tested, so that we can bring the case to the right public authority, which may in this case be the Swedish Social Insurance Agency [who could grant the person sickness compensation].
(Project leader, the Globe model, 17 October 2017)

In the next step, the planning phase, the client and social worker should agree on what the client should do next to improve their situation and move forward, and what resources are necessary to accomplish this. Such resources may assist with managing their home or contacts with other agencies such as the job or health-care centres or a suitable programme.

In the implementation phase, the focus was placed on collaboration with other parties and enrolment in suitable programmes, hopefully changing the situation for the client so that they became self-sufficient: that is, the implementation of plans made in the previous phase. However, in practice, it was not unusual that the client for a reason such as addiction, unforeseen events or ill health, discontinued their 'change plan', at which point it must be revised or rewritten completely. Therefore, in practice, clients would move back and forth on the process arrow.

Constructing the Model

The Globe model originated in the social services office where we conducted fieldwork as an effort to structure and represent their collected professional experience of their task: namely, making clients financially self-sufficient.

Over the course of our study, it was developed, refined and spread to eventually become the standard in all 14 social services offices in the municipality. There were several reasons why this social service office felt the need to develop this model.

First and foremost, it was a tool for creating better working conditions for the social workers. The model was meant to help social workers, especially those who lacked experience (which is common) to understand the practices and work processes of social work and economic assistance by clearly mapping out the steps to take. The model also provided a roadmap for a brighter future, not only for the client but also for the social worker, showing even small steps of progress for everyone involved, thereby sparking hope. As in Robert Burns' (1798) famous poem, the best-laid plans of mice and men may often go awry, but in the model, there was always the possibility of a new plan. The focus group system also contributed to making the workload seem manageable rather than overwhelming. As one of the unit heads said in a workshop about the model: 'The benefits of the model are that it creates a structure and reduces stress' (Head of unit, 6 December 2016).

Second, with time, and particularly as it became more formalised and spread outside the office of origin, the model also evolved into a tool for governing and controlling social workers. Initially, the model did not include measuring and keeping track of where each client was in the process. As the head of the unit tried to promote the model to other social services offices, aspects such as efficiency and the ability to control became more important. This dissemination was partly necessary for it to become part of the municipal digital platform. Politicians especially tended to view it as primarily a method to increase efficiency; therefore, they requested hard numerical evidence that the model had indeed increased client turnover. The resulting governance and control were achieved in two ways. First, an assigned social worker checked on the prioritised clients for each social worker each month to document progress towards self-sufficiency and collected these data on a huge spreadsheet to track the progress of all focus clients at the office. This time-consuming task amounted to more or less a full-time job. In addition, the manager or the project leader had a monthly meeting with each social worker, when they would go through the list of focus clients and discuss their progress or lack thereof. This monitoring made it evident that some social workers did not structure their work as expected. As one of the project leaders said:

> Part of it is shouldering your responsibility. And then there is: 'How many meetings have you booked this month? No, we agreed that you cannot book ten meetings. It takes too much time … . It's not realistic. You can only book three'. So, there are those as well. Those who want to do too much. There needs to be a discussion about … . Well, what's reasonable, given the way the system is set up. The system is wrong. Yes, we have too many clients in relation to …'
>
> (Project leader, the Globe model, 17 October 2017)

Third, it was a tool for strengthening the profession and showing politicians that even though clients may not become self-sufficient, they continued to progress. The statistics available previously only showed the numbers of clients who became self-sufficient, which were often dismal due to the complex and difficult nature of the problems of many long-term clients. The model made smaller steps of progress visible to politicians too. As one project leader reported:

> [We were] able to show the numbers [and] we're able to follow it up. Because that's another purpose of the project. To be able to show this social change work. Because the exercise of public authority, that's what research focuses on, the welfare norm (in Swedish, *riksnorm*) and … that's the image people have of us, that we just hand out money. [The tool] makes it visible that we do so much more and show what that process looks like in different types of cases, that it's not always straightforward progress towards the goal. There are, well, these obstacles that we identify along the way.
>
> (Project leader, the Globe model, 17 October 2017)

By highlighting the social work aspect, beyond the bureaucratic exercise of public authority, the social workers thus endeavoured to strengthen their profession in relation to politicians by demonstrating how 'actual' social work could transform the lives of clients; therefore, it needed resources. In this way, part of the intention of developing the model was to address the perceived systemic problem: namely, too many clients for too few social workers.

The development, dissemination and implementation of the model was underway throughout our fieldwork: such as workshops on how to use the model, new hires being introduced to it by mentors and continuous talk about the model in staff meetings. The heads of unit and the project leaders developed expertise in creating 'atmospheres of hope' (cf. Thedvall, 2017) around it. A common technique was to recount a particular 'success story' of a client whose life had been turned around by the Globe model. This was a story we heard many times. The client had been seen as a hopeless case. A war refugee, she was traumatised and had inoperable shell splinters in her body, which left her in chronic pain and afraid to move outside her apartment. When she became a focus client and followed the Globe model process, she was persuaded by her social worker to have her ability to work tested at the job centre. It turned out she could manage half a full-time workload, and following a support programme and an internship, a year later she had not one but two jobs and was self-sufficient. In addition, her self-esteem and overall life situation had improved. The promise of the Globe model was that it could make change happen even for the 'hopeless'.

As we have stated earlier, the Globe model was an experience-based model developed in a social services office at the initiative of and by social

workers, who also worked continuously to embed it in the working practices and processes of that office. It may be assumed that the result was govern-mentality at its most potent, effectively shaping the subjectivity of the social workers, which will be the focus of the next section.

Transforming Social Workers?

As we have seen, the Globe model was primed to play a significant part in shaping the understanding and practices of social work, so it highlights the malleability of the social workers' subjectivities in relation to the model in use. What was the extent of this transformation, and how did compliance and resistance affect it?

In many ways, the model permeated the office. Visual representations were displayed in every available workspace. It was present in the record system and later in the digital system for work with the clients. It arose in conversation, workshops and staff meetings. In interviews, the social work-ers were all familiar with the model. New staff, in particular, were often positive:

> There's a structure to follow. Start with the mapping, then make a change plan, try to follow it, maybe make a FIA, and then… . That's kind of what it is, you put the plan into action, whatever it is, it may be involving the job centre, or… . 'No, you should focus on your rehabilita-tion with help of the health care services', that kind of thing.
>
> (Social worker, 11 October 2017)

Irrespective of attitudes, the model shaped the understanding of how social work was to be performed within the office. It steered the perception of what social work was about, by clearly structuring the process into set phases and giving everyone a mental image of social work as a linear progress towards a universal goal. The model provided a signpost arrow pointing to a brighter future where all clients could be helped to self-sufficiency. The individual client may stop or even reverse, but the arrow would always point them to-wards the universal goal.

Compliance came easy for some social workers, who really took to the model and found it useful in structuring their work with clients. It suited their way of thinking and working. Significantly, they liked the order and systematic approach it provided, as it fitted their preferred way of going about their work. One of the model's keenest enthusiasts, often called upon to explain to other colleagues how to apply it, explained:

> Well, I think this is fun, and I think the whole process and the Globe model are fun to work with. I know you can get stuck sometimes or go backwards. That's the way it is with these six steps. Sometimes it happens […] . You can learn things too. You realise, when you made

someone a focus client, and then 'Well, he's going to the job centre now. That's great. He's probably going to get a training position soon. He's ready', and then suddenly: 'No, he relapsed. Oh well. I thought he was more or less sober now'. Well, then you have to back up and check. 'Ok, so does he need a contact with [another unit] to get help with his addiction?' That kind of thing.

(Social worker, 6 November 2017)

This particular social worker was also working as a mentor to new recruits, a task he shared with a colleague with a similar perception of the model:

I think this has been an excellent model to use, to get this structured, and see what happens in these cases and so on, the mapping and everything.

(Social worker, 2 October 2018)

To some of the social workers, the model was naturalised into their work practices and it was easy for them to explain how it fitted into their process, as in this example provided by one social worker of how she picked 'focus clients':

I've chosen partly based on gender because we have this gender equality work. I think I have 50–50 now. Then I've chosen based on whether they are introverted or extroverted, so that we don't inadvertently discriminate against the introverted quiet ones, which I often feel we do. Well, not just here, in general.

(Social worker, 6 November 2017)

Although the Globe model was widely known in the office, this does not mean that all social workers necessarily internalised it and there were also instances of resistance. For example, some of the more experienced staff were less appreciative. As one senior social worker exclaimed when he was told the monthly check-up meeting with the manager about his priority cases was cancelled because of a threat against the office that suddenly interrupted proceedings:

Bloody hell, that was a stroke of luck! Now I won't have to sit there like some schoolboy.

(Social worker, 14 December 2018)

The structured process towards a universal goal was not necessarily a good fit for all clients. For particularly troubled ones, social workers would tell us in conversation that the realistic goal was not self-sufficiency, but survival and a roof over their head. For these social workers, the model receded into the background. They needed to take the model into account and relate to it, but it was not an obvious part of their everyday work practices. While

some newcomers found the model helpful, others found it difficult to interpret and translate into practice. A particular recurring puzzle was what to do with those that were not 'focus clients'. What did the model suggest? Was it acceptable only to assess their benefits and leave it at that? But then were not all clients entitled to support in their change work? Was 'the trampoline' not for everyone? This conundrum, to the increasing frustration of the head of unit, was intermittently raised in meetings and conversations throughout the field study. Models by default are simplified, idealised versions of reality, and so require interpretation.

In this case, the reality was that there was insufficient time to work with everybody, as prescribed by laws and regulations for social services. The pragmatic solution was a largely unspoken realisation that it was acceptable not to do so. This discrepancy between the pragmatic, sometimes depressing reality of social work and the rosier ideals of social services work, as expressed in social law and during their training as social workers, meant that some social workers found it difficult to make sense of the model. For example, one of the newer recruits, despite mentoring by the enthusiast quoted above, had difficulty prioritising clients to work on instead of trying to work with all her clients all the time (as befitted her perception of social work). The result was that she was overwhelmed and always behind with her administration. As the model in practice did not reflect the perception of social work they had been taught, these workers found the model confusing. An inadvertent side effect of the model was thus that it highlighted to the social workers the 'systematic error' that the project leader had mentioned: there are too few social workers and too many clients to provide effective social change work for all clients.

The structured process of the model was not a perfect fit for all experienced social workers either. Some had other established ways of working that the model would not change. One senior social worker explained his working process. For example, he would try a programme or initiative. If that did not work, he tried another. He continued the trial and error until one worked and helped the client. 'That's all there is to it', he said. Another senior social worker explained:

> Not to be mean or anything, but I think that has been my aim throughout my whole career as a social worker: to get rid of my clients. That, well, that [head of unit] has put a name on it and calls it [the Globe model] … well, that's great.
>
> (Social worker, 9 November 2017)

His point was that the goal had always been the same, the model was just a fancy and appealing package for that truth. In the end, in the opinion of these experienced social workers, applying it meant was just keeping at it, until they find an effective strategy for each particular client. Moreover, they adjusted the goal. For some clients, self-sufficiency is unrealistic. If they

managed a reasonably stable life and did not drink themselves into an early grave or become homeless, that is all the social workers could hope for and they would consider themselves successful if this was accomplished.

The more experienced social workers often had their own way of practicing social work based on personal experience and their own personality, irrespective of which model was currently in fashion. It may be structured to suit the model or it may be more trial and error as in the example above. As a result, there was compliance or resistance to the model. For some, as mentioned above, this structured, goal-oriented way of performing social work that the model suggested did not fit their approach to social work—or to life in general, for that matter. As a result, they lacked the necessary faith in the model. One social worker, who had been at the unit for some time, said:

> I often think it's hard, because there is this pressure for something to happen, and everything. This should get done, and this, and this, and at the same time, you should manage to be empathic and have patience. It's very hard. And because… . Well, you were at my check-up meeting. It feels like it's not always rewarded, but… . Or you don't get as much acknowledgement for that; you get recognition for being this project-y, driven person. You get a lot of acknowledgement for that. But this, being here in the everyday, thinking really long-term; it's not visible in the same way.
>
> (Social worker, 15 October 2018)

This observation, made after the model had undergone the development discussed above and had been focused on control and measurement of progress, also highlights that the underlying and increasingly pronounced assumption of promoting efficiency had also influenced its application in the unit. The ambition to highlight their work had, to some extent, shifted the perception of what it meant to be a social worker, so that achieving visible progress in a comparatively short time and identifying specific interventions and measures had become more important.

This social worker had a different understanding of her work than that provided by the step-by-step model: she wanted to take her time with the clients. She wished to know them and understand what could work for them, whereas the model was all about moving forward in a set way. However, her working style tapped into another model in use in Swedish social services: Motivational Interviewing (MI), so this social worker became the office coach in MI. Such a coach was needed, because MI was also to be used throughout the municipality, and all social workers were expected to have received MI training. The MI model was based on more circular thinking, and it focused on change talk, such as motivating people to change through listening with empathy, understanding the clients' motivations, resisting the urge to tell clients what to do and instead empowering them to achieve their goals. MI was incorporated into the Globe model as one of the tools

available in the planning and implementation phase. However, MI could also be seen as *the* way to do social work, whereby it is at its core not an arrow and a series of interventions but an iterative process with the aim of gradually changing the clients' fundamental perceptions of themselves and their possibilities, leading to an improvement of their overall situation as a result of their changed mindset. As clients often deviate from plans and programmes, some social workers found the Globe model stressful because its assumption of linear progress towards a universal goal did not describe the messy reality they experienced in their work. The multi-model reality of work practices in the public sector allowed such social workers a way out, as they could opt to lean more heavily on another model that was more compatible with their own understanding, in this case, MI.

Although the Globe model dominated the office, both visually and audibly, social workers' different approaches to it highlight that a shared understanding of a model can still result in large disparities in its use, ranging from a guiding principle to a pretty image with little bearing on actual work. Although finding the model a good fit to some extent provided an easier work situation, especially in the monthly check-up meetings, social workers, as long as they found a way to complete their tasks and help clients, had the freedom to choose. The head of unit would say that this diversity of approaches was a strength because it allowed the office to manage a multitude of types of clients and find methods that would work reasonably well for each of them. This multi-model reality also highlights that while social workers were, to some extent malleable, they would also allow or not allow a specific model to affect them, opting for a leading model that fitted their preconceptions of their work. Mirroring the social workers' differing approaches to the model, managers also differed in their use of the model, dividing tasks between them so that the model supporters held the monthly check-up meetings, while others focused on other tasks. However, at the management level, the dominance of the Globe model in talk and organisational activities was more visible and managers clearly played an important role in making the model dominant.

Conclusion

The Globe model, initiated and developed by the office that used it, in many respects seems to be a prime example of how models serve as technology of governmentality, and as a result transform the subjectivities of those who are subject to it, be they clients or social workers. To some extent, this was confirmed, in the sense that the model became a widely shared and ubiquitous presence in the office and all social workers had a shared understanding of it. It became the discursively dominant way for social workers to orient themselves and determine appropriate ways of performing social work (Hansen Löfstrand and Jacobsson, this volume).

Most social workers in this case had positive views of the model, partly because it reflected existing practices: a result of it being 'native'. It provided a fix for the systemic problem of too many clients per social worker, as it legitimated focusing on a few clients at a time, thereby making the workload manageable. The model made it possible to be a good social worker even though one was unable to work with all clients as the ideal suggested and highlighted even small successes, albeit the final goal of self-sufficiency had not yet been reached. Furthermore, it transformed the messy reality of social problems into a neat six-step process that could be a sense-making tool for new recruits.

However, when we look at actual working practices, it seems that human subjectivity was less malleable. Those who embraced the model were those whose subjectivity was already congruent with it before it was introduced. The model was based on a particular way of structuring work based on linear thinking. For those who already worked this way, the model fitted. They embraced it and allowed it to further direct their perceptions in this direction. For others, with different perceptions and working styles based on more iterative, circular thinking or a 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again' attitude, the model represented *a* way of thinking, but not *their* way. It was a model for others; however, it was possible to use either a different model or rely on their own. The multitude of models often available and present in public services thus created a degree of freedom for workers, as they could opt to lean more heavily on the model that best suited their methods and subjectivity, occasionally at the price of putting them at odds with organisational activities based on the dominant model, such as the monthly check-up meetings. In this way, the study highlights that the effects of the same model on practices and perceptions in the same social context differ between individuals, and ethnographic studies allow nuanced understanding of the effects of governmentality in practice.

Our study shows how personal frames of reference and professional identities modify the ability of a model to transform subjectivity to the extent that they significantly limit its power to transform the practices of its users. It mainly shapes those, whose perceptions were consistent with the model to begin with. Put another way, human subjectivity is malleable mainly along pre-existing ways of thinking and working. Individual differences in frames of reference and professional identity filter interpretation and thereby the capacity of the model to transform subjectivities. Thus, given that the organisation allows it, the formation of subjectivity to some extent remains individual.

Notes

2 Assessment instrument network meetings, 14 hours; Head of unit network meetings, 12 hours; Method network meetings, 15 hours; The application (in Swedish, *tillämpning*) network, six hours; Lex Sarah network meeting, two hours.
3 Introduction to Initial Assessment, three hours; Orientation days for new hires, 14 hours; Orientation day for new hires for social assistance, seven hours; Head of unit introduction to Initial Assessment, three hours; MI in relation to Initial Assessment, seven hours.
4 Mostly case processing meetings (32.5 hours), but we also attended MI group meetings; unit meetings; morning meetings; workplace meetings (In Swedish, *APT*), head of unit meetings, focus group meetings, etc.

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3   The Storying of Experience

Shaping Caseworker Subjectivity at Social Insurance Agencies

Kerstin Jacobsson

Introduction

This chapter investigates the role of organizational narratives and story-telling in shaping caseworker subjectivity at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (SIA), combining insights from critical management studies (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Knights & McCabe 2003) and narrative ethnography (e.g. Gubrium & Holstein 2008). This welfare state bureaucracy has undergone drastic shifts in management styles and priorities during the past decade, with each shift being accompanied by changes in the legitimatizing organizational narratives concerning the challenges the agency faces as well as the role of SIA caseworkers.

These narratives, it is argued, circulate in the organization at all levels and trickle down to the front line, shaping caseworker subjectivity by 'storying' their experience. This storying process is one of sense-making of work aided by the discursive templates provided by the organization, such as vocabularies and scripts, as well as narrative accounts of the past and the present and visions of a different future. These provide a logic and rationality to action and signal ways of being an 'appropriate' SIA caseworker. The analysis suggests that organizational narratives were key in achieving both a destabilization and a re-subjectification of caseworkers. Moreover, it is argued that organizational narratives have the capacity to 'seep through the skin' by storying caseworker experience.

The ethnographic observations of 'narrative occasions' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 247), such as staff meetings and teamwork, in combination with individual interviews, allow the analysis of the collective processes of storying individual experience. The chapter analysis shows that organizational discourse may be highly effective in producing an appropriate individual (Alvesson & Willmott 2002), even in a highly formal and bureaucratic setting.

Narrative shaping of subjectivity

In forming subjectivity, we are all dependent on the vocabularies and notions made available by the discourses surrounding us, from which we come

to understand ourselves in our efforts to attain self-knowledge and self-improvement—and in the context of this chapter, to meet the expectations placed on us as employees.

Organizational discourses can be seen as a form of governance; however, individuals, as organizational subjects, can respond to them in a variety of ways. The important insight from Foucault and the governmentality tradition he inspired concerned the active participation of subjects in their subjectivity formation (e.g. Foucault 1997). Of special interest to this chapter are, the narrative aspects of organizational discourse—organizational narratives and storytelling, and their role in shaping caseworker subjectivity. To this end, the analysis combines insights from critical management studies (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Knights & McCabe 2003; McKinlay & Starkey 1998) and narrative ethnography (e.g. Gubrium & Holstein 2008).

Critical management scholars have explored the role of organizational discourse in shaping identities and subjectivities in organizations (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott 2002; Bergström & Knights 2006). Regulation of identity has been seen as a form of organizational control, accomplished through the self-positioning of employees within managerially inspired discourses about work and organization that to some extent engender their inspiration or commitment (Alvesson & Willmott 2002: 620). Alvesson and Kärreman used the concept of 'socio-ideological control' to describe efforts that cause '… people to adapt to certain values, norms and ideas about what is good, important, praiseworthy, etc. in terms of work and organizational life' (2004: 426). Similarly, Kunda used the concept of 'normative control' for management attempts to elicit and direct the required efforts of organization members by controlling underlying experiences, thoughts and feelings that guide their actions (Kunda 2006: 11). Successful control draws on employee's emotional identification and commitment to organizational goals because when employees have genuine passion for their work, they feel a strong sense of loyalty to the organization (ibid.). For a committed person, reaching organizational goals constitutes a source of personal satisfaction.

To foster commitment, critical management scholars, in a similar way to the governmentality tradition, have pointed out that managing 'the insides'—fears, hopes, aspirations—is a key instrument (Alvesson & Willmott 2002: 620; Deetz 1995: 87). In this chapter, I use the notion of subjectivity for that 'inside'—referring to SIA caseworkers' wants or aspirations, feelings and ultimately who they are at work.

Kunda saw organizational rituals as mechanisms by which organizational norms are internalized, infusing participants with 'the right mindset and the appropriate gut reactions' (Kunda 2006: 93). This chapter focuses on storytelling as a mechanism for shaping subjectivities at work. Additionally, the analysis draws on narrative ethnography, the benefit of which is to place the social processes of subjectivity formation at the centre of attention, based on the premise that the self is formed in communicative relations with others (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 243).

Narrative ethnography views organizations as narrative environments, understood as the 'complex and overlapping contexts of the storying process' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 247). This type of analysis entails the study of social situations and their actors and actions in relation to narratives, and of narratives in their social context. The storying process is seen as a situated activity unfolding in social interaction (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 251), and the analysis 'opens to empirical inspection the social processes and circumstances through which narratives are constructed, promoted, and resisted' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 256). There may be different narrative environments within an organization, enabling different stories to be challenged as well as confirmed. Even so, each narrative environment affirms certain established stories and ways of narrating experience, privileging particular accounts for organizational purposes while marginalizing counter-narratives (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 253–254).

This chapter investigates the SIA as just such a narrative environment with privileged stories. Narratives provide interpretative guides to make sense of events and to suggest connections between them, to call for action, to build identities; but importantly for this chapter, also to understand experience. Narratives do not simply reflect experience: 'Rather, narratives comprise the interplay between experience, storying practices, descriptive resources, purposes at hand, audiences and the environments that condition storytelling' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 250). I argue that it is in/by such interplay that subjectivities are produced. Narratives shape subjectivities by 'formatting' experience according to discursive templates, and by achieving cognizance in relation to individual experience. I refer to this process as the narrative shaping of subjectivity.

Such shaping reflects 'the circumstances under which self-interpretation takes place', meaning that self-formation processes draw on 'culturally endorsed formats' (Gubrium & Holstein 2001: 9). Wetherell argues that as organizational members, we confront transpersonal 'ready-mades', such as routines, which in some sense 'land on' people and 'subject' them (2012: 125). 'Subject' may be too strong here, however, I see the ready-mades as suggestive—they sketch out subject positions and legitimate subjectivities to which organizational members may respond in different ways. Even so, social relationships arrive with the affective slots for actors already sketched out (Wetherell 2012: 125). The ready-mades we explore in this chapter are the narratives conveyed in organizational gatherings. They provide vocabularies, scripts and other discursive templates for being appropriate SIA caseworkers, including appropriate feelings about their work. I suggest that stories seep through the skin by providing affective slots.

Analytical approach and sources of data

The analytical approach herein draws on narrative ethnography. Because stories come from somewhere, one question guiding the analysis of the

caseworkers' accounts is 'whose voice do we hear?' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 255). Narrative ethnography scholars question the ownership of narratives and experiential fidelity of individual accounts, focusing on the social dimensions of the narratives. Stories are assembled, recounted and received with a variety of consequences; the analysis consequently attends to such 'narrative occasions' (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 247). The analysis focuses on the content of narratives accompanying management shifts at the SIA, as well as the more operational scripts and stories (as 'mini-narratives') based on them, that circulate in the organization. These stories convey a moral message and give direction, providing rationales for action and ways of being an appropriate SIA caseworker of proper character.

The analysis is based on ethnographic work in five local SIA offices in 2016–2017 combined with 38 qualitative semi-structured interviews with their staff members: caseworkers and local managers as well as local medical and insurance specialists aiding the caseworkers to assess cases. In addition, 16 interviews were conducted at the central SIA head office in 2015–2016, and organizational documents were reviewed.[1] Additionally, the analysis draws on secondary studies of SIA caseworkers conducted during the same period (Fransson & Qvist 2018; ISF 2018), re-interpreting them in the light of narrative practices.

The ethnographic observations followed the method of 'shadowing' (Czarniawska 2007) the individual caseworkers in their daily work (but for confidentiality reasons excluding direct client interactions, which were in any case rare, as described below). In addition, social settings and narrative occasions, such as staff or management training sessions, staff, team, or management meetings as well as interaction in lunchrooms and office spaces, were observed. Teamwork was institutionalized as the working method in all SIA offices; there were separate teams of caseworkers and managers. In addition, 'leadership by coaching' was practiced, whereby managers and specialists guided the caseworkers through dialogue and advice. Both working methods were seen as tools for organizational learning (Jacobsson & Hollertz 2021). From the perspective of this chapter, they constitute key narrative occasions on which organizational stories and scripts were conveyed and caseworker subjectivities framed and shaped.

The SIA is one of the largest state bureaucracies in Sweden, with over 14,000 employees. Approximately 25 percent of the state budget is directly linked to the SIA's expenses (Försäkringskassan 2018). While the SIA is responsible for social insurance, the present study limits its focus to staff administrating health insurance. The caseworkers' formal tasks are first to assess and control client eligibility for sickness benefits, and second, to co-ordinate their rehabilitation with other stakeholders, such as the healthcare system or the Public Employment Service. Since 2008, the caseworkers have followed the 'rehabilitation chain', which is a legislated working method requiring the assessment of clients' work capacity at fixed time

intervals: after 90 days in relation to other tasks with the same employer, and after 180 days in relation to 'normally existing jobs' throughout the labour market.

Narrative turning points and the practice of confession

In addition to legislation (the Social Insurance Code), the SIA is governed by annual letters of regulation from the government. Both the political goals and the internal governance of the agency have shifted drastically over the years (e.g. ISF 2018), including changes of Directors General with different management styles and leadership visions. It is well known that storytelling can be used as a strategic management tool to influence employees' views of the organization and adapt them to workplace changes (e.g. Brown et al. 2005). In the SIA, changes in senior management and organizational objectives have been accompanied by shifts in the legitimizing narratives. Below, we first examine shifts in the overall narrative environment following the management changes, including the need for confession to 'old wrongs' and the apologies that these entail. Thereafter, we consider the operational stories that shape caseworker subjectivity by scripting their experience.

Personal identity can be understood as a life story with high points, low points and turning points (McAdam 1993: 296). As our stories crystallize and change, our selves develop and transform in the process. Understanding where we come from and where are we going are part of understanding who we are. Turning points are also key features of organizational life and instrumental in shaping the narratives of organizational identity and the self. The narrative is the central element in reconstructing the past and making sense of the present. Contingency tends to disappear in retrospect, and history, when recounted, appears to be more meaningful and coherent than when the events took place. According to Ricoeur, 'There is always *more* order in what we narrate than in what we have actually already lived; and this narrative excess of order, coherence and unity, is a prime example of the creative power of language' (1991: 468).

In the SIA, management shifts have been accompanied by changes in the legitimizing narratives, with clear notions of 'then' versus 'now' entailing a ritual distancing from the 'bad past'. As part of this distancing and to confirm organizational belonging and identity in the present, the narrative practice of confession ('I was wrong' or 'we were wrong') is common in the SIA. As Foucault points out, confession is a ritual that unfolds in a power relationship as it occurs in the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who prescribes and appreciates it (Foucault 1998: 61–62). Thus, ritual expressions of culpability and remorse entail the affirmation of norms (Foucault 1998), in this case, the current organizational norms of appropriateness. Their frequency, and the fact that this practice seems to come naturally to the members of the organization, indicate that confession to past wrongs is

a culturally endorsed format in the SIA. Moreover, contrary to Foucault's analysis, in the SIA, it is often a collective practice. Confession and apology enable organizational members to remain loyal and follow along with the shifts in management styles and priorities.

During the period 2011–2014, a management ideology based on 'value-based governance' was implemented in the SIA, including teamwork, leadership by coaching and a strong customer orientation. The political instruction to the agency at that time was to increase public confidence in the agency and in the health insurance, which had long remained low. This value-based governance entailed a shift in the narrative environment. It was presented as a move away from what were recounted as 'command-and-control' models of governing as well as strict management by objectives and results, which was now described as promoting 'statistical behaviour' (efforts to improve statistics) and 'point-hunting' (*pinnjakt*). The shift was reflected in a change of language, replacing words associated with hierarchy and bureaucracy with more personal and positive expressions of governance activities in the agency. For instance, words such as 'control' and 'decide' were replaced by 'coach', 'guide', or 'propose' (Tamm Hallström & Thedvall 2015). Clients were no longer to be referred to as 'cases' but as 'customers', in accordance with the strongly reinforced customer orientation. However, sometimes the 'case thinking' caused slips of the tongue, requiring self-correction: 'then you get more cases—no, more customers, I should say, not cases' (official, SIA head office). The dominant organizational narrative at the time was as follows:

> From 2008 to 2012, the focus was on productivity. What happened on that journey was that we the lost the customer; we lost those for whom we are there. Thus, public confidence in the SIA nosedived.
>
> (Official, SIA head office)

In the organizational discourse, the work of change was labelled 'Our shared journey' (Eliasson & Brattlund n.d.), implying that all staff were expected to follow along. For those who had been strongly committed to previous forms of governance, this entailed a need to express remorse and confirm the new commitment. Several senior officials expressed in the interviews that they had previously 'believed in management by objectives and results' but subsequently realized 'that was wrong' because then 'you get what you measure' and quantitative targets are prioritized over qualitative aspects of the work. A local manager confessed:

> I have been part of introducing new public management and that has almost become the new bad word in this new [period] [laughter] […] it is pretty embarrassing that we have contributed to that [statistical behaviour] to the extent that we have.
>
> (Local manager)

However, in 2015, a new Director General (DG) was appointed and a radical shift in management ideology took place, this time emphasizing regulation, quality and uniformity of case assessment, a return to stricter management by objectives and results, and once again a 'production' orientation. Moreover, in 2016, the centre-left government introduced a numerical target for the sickness absence rate in Sweden; it was stated that 'the sickness benefit rate must not exceed 9.0 days per individual per year in 2020', as the national average (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 2016). This clear target served as a benchmark for the work, and efforts to reach this goal permeated all the local offices studied in this research.

The new DG wanted the term 'customer' to be replaced by 'the insured person', stressing that the most important task of SIA caseworkers is to administrate health insurance correctly. The role models were the private insurance companies and their operations. As a local manager, interviewed by the Social Insurance Inspectorate, bluntly expressed it: 'We are actually the insurance company for Sweden, that is, the insurance company for the state' (ISF 2018: 16, 88). The caseworkers were called to 'make it correct from the start' in order to 'increase the quality of assessment' and 'make sure that the right person gets the right benefit' (Försäkringskassan 2016: 2). At local office level, this was interpreted as controlling more strictly 'who will enter [sic] the insurance' (local insurance specialist).

The insurance identity of the organization was reflected in a key concept permeating the discourse at all levels of the organization—the Swedish neologism *försäkringsmässighet* (approximately translated by 'insurance wiseness'). Caseworkers were expected to be 'insurance-wise' in their assessment. The vagueness of the concept meant that it could be loaded with different meanings. For some interviewees, it meant being careful in the first eligibility assessment; for others, it meant increasing the number of rejections or withdrawals of benefit: 'insurance-wiseness indirectly means rejections and withdrawals' (divisional manager).

In addition, just as private insurance companies do not need to meet their clients, client contact was now to be reduced—not only because it was considered to take valuable time from case assessment work but also because personal relationships with clients jeopardized the objectivity of assessments (see Altermark 2020; Fransson & Quist 2018). This stood in stark contrast to the previous period, when all clients had a 'personal caseworker' and client orientation had been imperative. A caseworker described the change:

> It has changed just over the last year or year and a half so that there is less focus on personal client encounters, and we make decisions based on the information we get first. So we have had to deprioritize [personal encounters].
> (Caseworker)

This rather drastic shift in focus was legitimized by the narrative that the customer orientation of the previous period had led to a 'rather acquit than convict'

mentality in the agency, which was seen as having contributed to the increased number of days on sick benefit in the country. This narrative was spread at all levels in the agency and was reflected in caseworker accounts about the past and the present, as evidenced in our interviews as well as in other studies conducted in the same period. In Fransson & Qvist's study, for instance, the caseworker collective confirmed that they had been acting wrongly: 'Before we let them through based on inadequate documents' (Fransson & Qvist 2018: 163, also 174, 199). A caseworker in our study explained:

> Now, we have entered a new period when we look more strictly at the insurance and actually apply it correctly, while before we were, maybe, a bit less, well, not as strict in our assessments and all that.
>
> (Caseworker)

The 'all that' notion indicates that this caseworker repeats a well-known organizational narrative. She added: 'the insurance and the SIA function better now. People who are not ill should not get the sickness benefit. It was wrong before, and now it will be more correct.'

These caseworker accounts follow the well-known narrative pattern in the SIA: before, we were doing it wrongly; now, we do things the right way. When the same phrases and ways of legitimizing appear in a large number of interviews—and studies—we can conclude that there are strong organizational narratives permeating the organization. They serve as 'shared and standardized frameworks for anticipating, acting in and reflecting on' (Miller 1994: 283) the matters at hand—that is, appropriate casework. The voices we hear in those caseworker accounts are clearly those of management, even though the caseworkers phrase them in terms of their own experience and past actions. We now turn to the more operational stories (as mini-narratives), scripting caseworker action and experience, along with the dominant overall narratives just discussed.

Organizational storytelling and the scripting of subjectivity

Scripting of subjectivity in the SIA is a highly collective process in which the organization's members take active part. Telling stories is key in this process.

The stories convey a shared meaning and moral and are used to inculcate motivation and mobilize commitment among employees. As we learn from Foucault, power is not just constraining but also productive, capable of producing 'agentic' selves—that is, subjects who have what it takes, in this case, to be appropriate SIA caseworkers. Organizational stories, as transpersonal ready-mades, arrive with affective slots already sketched for the actors (Wetherell 2012: 125) and affective roles already cast. I suggest that it is from that scripting of subjectivity that the organizational stories derive both enabling and constraining power, influencing how caseworkers view themselves

and how they feel about their work. As such, the stories constitute a key component in the formation of appropriate 'character' in the SIA.

'The SIA has taken on other parties' responsibilities previously'

A story circulating in the organization was that 'the SIA has taken on other parties' responsibilities previously' (see also ISF 2018: 113). This meant that the SIA's role had not been delimited enough with regard to the employers and the health-care systems. This narrative was used to narrow down the role of SIA caseworkers to focus on case management and insurance admission controls while deprioritizing the task of co-ordinating rehabilitation measures with other stakeholders (a task prescribed by law). At one caseworker team meeting, the need to 'draw boundaries in relation to the surroundings' was discussed. 'We [the SIA] have taken on a responsibility that is not ours', the story went. Now it was time for the medical doctors and the employers to accept responsibility and not expect 'the SIA to take care of it all'. A specialist and former caseworker put it thus:

> Our current DG is clear about us having only one task, which is actually to apply insurance correctly. For the rest, other actors have to take responsibility. The care system must take responsibility for how many sick listings they have; that's not something the SIA can do anything about. The employers have to fix the work environment, and maybe the Public Employment Service needs another type of resource to work with the unemployed than what they have today. So, I mean, we can only take responsibility for what we have here. Maybe we have made our task too broad, sort of.
>
> (Specialist, former caseworker)

'We have serviced the employers', a local manager similarly reported. Again, when the same stories are reiterated by different categories of staff in different offices and are even evidenced in other studies (see ISF 2018), we can conclude that it is the organization speaking, even if the subjects frame the story in terms of their own experience. Only the more senior, and confident, caseworkers may have the power to question these narratives and stories. One such example is the following:

> When we turn the ship and say, 'We shouldn't help health care; we shouldn't help the employers', I feel like: Where does this come from? We have never helped health care, nor the employers. On the contrary, we work together to reach the goal of having fewer people on sick lists.
>
> (Caseworker cited in ISF 2018: 114)

While most caseworkers in our study fully embraced the narrow focus of eligibility control at the expense of stakeholder co-ordination, some felt more

ambivalent about it: 'Now it is more just about administrating the insurance, about what you are or aren't entitled to, and not so much co-ordinating and helping people back to work' (Caseworker). Another caseworker expressed the following view:

> I think it is really sad, because the SIA is such an incredibly important actor in co-ordination with other authorities and health care. So now we lose that—which also means that the individual in the middle of it won't be able to get the support and help that he/she may need.
>
> (Caseworker)

Not just collaboration with other stakeholders was deprioritized; client interaction was also minimized during this period. The parallel with private insurance companies legitimized this change; caseworkers do not need to meet their clients in person but make decisions based on the documents submitted. The accompanying organizational script was that it was easier to follow the rules without personal contact and to make 'negative decisions' (to decline or withdraw benefits) (see also Fransson & Quist 2018: 120–121), which was said to improve compliance with law and achieve equal outcomes. 'Because we shouldn't be too close. I should guard your entitlement to benefits' (caseworker). The parallel to private insurance was explicit: 'We shouldn't have economic responsibility for them. We need to get away from that. And I look upon it as ordinary insurance' (ibid). 'It is a bit like this; it's an insurance [policy] like any other. It doesn't cover everything and after half a year it doesn't cover this anymore (caseworker, referring here to the increasingly strict assessment of work capacity in relation to normal jobs in the labour market, which was made after 180 days.)

'Sick listing is not the best medicine'

'Sick listing is not the best medicine' was another organizational truth circulating: 'the longer you are sick listed, the more difficult it is to return', according to this narrative. That work in itself is rehabilitative is the subject of research discourse in the field of work rehabilitation (see e.g. Seing 2014 for references), which was drawn upon to legitimize the current (tougher) application of the insurance. 'Work actually promotes health. You can actually feel better by working' (area manager). The SIA wrote in a discussion on preventing sick absence: 'Research in recent years has increasingly found negative consequences from sick listing as a method of treatment' (Försäkringskassan 2015: 2). Thus, selective research findings were used to support the current organizational narratives and scripts.

A related story told and retold was that medical doctors were much too inclined to sick list people, even for minor problems, which in light of the truth discourse about work as rehabilitative was positioned as almost immoral. 'Many doctors ought to have a more health-oriented attitude. "Of

course you can work 25 percent per day. That's not much"' (caseworker). One experienced caseworker reported that the newly recruited staff were very tough in their assessments, as they had another view of illness: 'You can work even if you have pain in a thumb. That's a matter of attitude' this caseworker reported approvingly.

In one of the offices, a divisional manager used the expression: 'People cannot become healthy if they are already healthy when they enter the insurance', which was then repeated by caseworkers. This narrative was used to legitimize a stricter assessment of the medical certificates, especially as regards mental health diagnoses—to avoid granting 'healthy' people insurance.

Consequently, organizational narratives prescribed how caseworkers were to view insurance and see themselves as 'insurance investigators', which is (at the time of writing, 2021) the caseworkers' formal designation. By telling stories based on the organizational narratives and scripts, organization members served as co-enforcers of these norms of appropriateness. Storytelling was instrumental in establishing the parameters of good–bad, acceptable–unacceptable, appropriate–inappropriate ways of thinking, acting and being—in our case as an SIA caseworker, and thus streamlined caseworker thinking and action by 'formatting' subjectivity.

'The overly kind caseworker'

The desired caseworker subjectivity accompanying the script of insurance wiseness was not to be too kind [*snäll*]. 'We approve too many [benefit applications]; we are too kind. That's where the problem lies', was said in a group interview with caseworkers in another office (cited in Altermark 2020: 75). A caseworker in our study reported that her office now rejected applications and withdrew benefits much more often than before. When asked why, she responded:

> We control the medical certificates more critically. Before we could probably be more flexible and let medical certificates pass that probably shouldn't. One might think so. And one may question oneself a bit now. Maybe we were a bit too kind, assessment-wise.
>
> (Caseworker)

This caseworker conforms to the main narrative and script but rather hesitantly, attesting to the strong normative pressure on caseworkers to conform and start evaluating their performance in the new way.

The affective role conveyed in the organizational storytelling was that of a caseworker who is not too soft-hearted in the case assessment. The expression 'It is not "feel-sorry-for insurance"' was used by some of the caseworkers, dismissing soft-heartedness as an appropriate quality for a SIA caseworker. The 'overly kind caseworker' image was thus contrary to the

proper character for the work. 'We should not be therapists' was an organizational script used to delimit the role of the caseworker as well as to avoid their taking emotional responsibility for clients. Different caseworkers expressing themselves in the same terms indicate that this is the organization speaking through the individuals. As a way of distancing themselves from the 'bad past', a distinction was often made between 'old timers' among caseworkers, who were too generous, versus the new recruits, who were more compliant with the law (as also evidenced by Altermark 2020: 74). A proper SIA caseworker must have the guts to reject claims. Two moral counter-stories that were key in scripting caseworker subjectivity in the manner desired by the organization were 'the insurance-wise caseworker' versus 'the caseworker who has never rejected claims'.

'The insurance-wise caseworker'

The insurance-wise caseworker referred to a caseworker who took on the role of gatekeeper to health insurance. The reinforced gatekeeper role was expressed in phrases such as not 'letting everyone in' but 'letting in the right people', as also evidenced in other studies from the same period (Fransson & Quist 2018: 174–176; ISF 2018: 69, 93). For most of the caseworkers studied, performing this gatekeeper role elicited pride and a sense of being on a heroic mission. Not only was the financial sustainability of this insurance at stake but even the sustainability of the welfare state for future generations. Guarding the 'entrance to this insurance', as it was framed, was nothing less than a heroic task. As we saw above, the organizational narrative was that the application of the insurance had been 'too generous before' and more restrictiveness was now required in case assessments, as phrased in the language of a caseworker:

> We have the world's best health insurance. But unfortunately, we don't protect the insurance […] far too many receive sickness benefits.
> (Caseworker)

Admission to the insurance was to be strictly controlled, in contrast to the past practice, which was described in terms of 'letting people pass': 'I feel that some have been [included] in the health insurance [scheme] who shouldn't be there, as we have let them pass' (caseworker). Caseworkers undertook 'to tighten up and secure admission to the insurance' (caseworker). Some caseworkers compared their gatekeeper performance with that of their colleagues. One caseworker stated:

> We have tried to involve the specialist working for the whole office and asked him to 'please tell us if we make assessments differently from those downstairs, and if we are not insurance-wise enough in our assessments'.
> (Caseworker)

These caseworkers sought self-improvement in terms of the current script, and their malleability in relation to this script was conceived to be desirable.

The caseworkers were well aware that the organizational goals—and thus their roles—had shifted over time:

> The work has changed a bit during these years and got much stricter in various ways, with rules and shrinking scope for discretion, co-ordination [of rehabilitation] is deprioritized, and there is much focus on us being insurance-wise. And I feel there is much focus on what the health insurance costs and that those costs must be reduced […] . The discretion that actually exists is gone, and the caseworkers' case management is going to be made uniform. And that's right; that's the way it should be.
>
> (Caseworker)

Despite the reflexivity expressed in this quote, this caseworker ends by confirming the current norm ('that's the way it should be'); thus, despite a certain ambivalence, the moral message 'sticks'. The normative pressure placed on caseworkers is clear from some caseworkers' accounts:

> Much focus today is on stopping [sickness benefits] at an early stage, not so much on co-ordination [of rehabilitation] in my experience. And that's not where my focus is, actually. […] . It may sound as if we are only working on withdrawing [benefits], but it is … well, the feeling is that we are much tougher. The rules are no different, but we have been too generous in relation to the rules before and now we are to think in a different way.
>
> (Caseworker)

Again, we see the organizational narrative 'we have been too generous before' being reiterated by the caseworkers, despite ambivalence about the current—rather one-sided—focus of work.

The following quote illustrates that it is in communicative relations in the local setting that organizational scripts 'land on' the subjects, and the subjectivity of participants is opened up, allowing the subject to be 're-formatted' (cf. Benson 2008: 275f):

> There has been a rather sharp turn after we started talking about us having to shape up [*skärpa oss*] in the application of the insurance. […] There is, like, an awakening for us here in the office, that 'now we have to shape up'. And then one tries to go all in and really structure all cases and look on them with fresh eyes.
>
> (Caseworker)

The awakening described here entails a new way of looking at oneself as a caseworker, including a new way of evaluating one's work. Experiences of

awakening—like conversion experiences generally—entail a clear 'before and after' and the move away from an unenlightened state to a new awareness (Jacobsson 2014) and a corresponding new affective repertoire, or in the terminology used in this article, subjectivity. Moreover, it entails self-positioning as a subject in *need* of awakening (Sunnerfjell 2020) and thus an openness to receiving guidance to achieve self-improvement. This openness is achieved by a destabilization of the way in which the caseworkers thought about themselves and their work, in which I argue the organizational narratives were key instruments. From management's perspective, achieving selves/subjectivities that go 'all in' (as in the quote above) is more efficient in delivering organizational goals than subjects that need to be commanded.

'The caseworker who has never rejected claims'

The new subjectivity required was one of courage—especially having the courage to decline and/or withdraw benefits. Storytelling was instrumental in communicating—and achieving—that correct ethos and pathos, as exemplified by the moral counter-story to that of the insurance-wise caseworker, namely 'the caseworker who has never rejected claims'. The moral message was that this was unacceptable, and that to work as an SIA caseworker, one must have what it takes, which is the ability to reject claims. In other words, the work requires the caseworker to have and demonstrate the proper character: 'You mustn't hesitate in this part of the job; when a person is no longer entitled to sickness benefits, then the person shouldn't have sickness benefits' (Caseworker).

The story about the caseworker who has never rejected claims circulated at all levels in the organization and could pop up in a range of settings and situations. A caseworker could say: 'I have colleagues who have never rejected claims.' A local office manager could confess to the other managers at a managers' meeting that: 'We have co-workers who have never withdrawn benefits or rejected claims.' This office manager then concluded that a change in local office culture was required where 'insurance wiseness' and equality of outcome were at the centre—thus conforming to the organizational script. Another office manager then advised the other managers that she raised the rejection rate in the dialogue with individual caseworkers, as part of leadership by coaching, asking: 'Can it really be reasonable that Kalle has rejected seven claims while you have rejected none?' Such coaching—as a form of advice to achieve transition away from a less to a more desired state—was framed in terms of organizational learning and was generally welcomed by the caseworkers in their strivings for self-improvement.

Storytelling as well as coaching was thus used to ensure that caseworkers conformed to organizational norms and scripts, encouraging them to display the right character. It takes courage to be a SIA caseworker, but conversely caseworkers living up to this norm may feel pride. One of the

most striking findings of our ethnographic research was precisely the pride caseworkers took in performing their gatekeeper role and in making ever-stricter eligibility assessments. In addition, the caseworkers received support and back-up from their managers in doing so.

9.0 as target and vision

The political target of 9.0 sick days as national average permeated the office culture in the offices studied and was the primary focus of the social processes (Jacobsson & Hollertz 2021). Workplace meetings were important narrative occasions when the collective performance in relation to this target was discussed. At one such meeting, an area manager informed the staff: 'Your task is to apply the insurance, of course; at the same time, you should know that 9.0 is a reasonable level as regards sick benefit. Now we are at 10.5' (Field note, observation). Another staff meeting was opened by the remark—and reminder—that 'All we do should achieve the goal of 9.0' (Field note, observation). Every month, the staff were shown office-level statistics on the number of rejections and withdrawals of benefits, as well as performance in relation to the 9.0 goal. Most caseworkers took pride in delivering good results, and the caseworker collective could even exult when the managers reported the office statistics. Their emotional reaction indicates that they had not just adapted strategically to the organizational objectives but had actually internalized them; thus, the organizational priorities and political aspirations had been effectively aligned with the aspirations of caseworkers. As Alvesson and Kärreman argued, 'managers do not only exercise control through prescribing behaviour or desired outputs. Managers also often seek to enact a particular form of organizational experience for others' (2004: 425), as illustrated by the emotional reactions at the office meetings.

Consequently, the organizational narratives were not only instrumental in shaping the caseworkers' view of health insurance, their clients and the other stakeholders (such as physicians or the Public Employment Service); they were also instrumental in shaping how the SIA staffed looked upon themselves and their colleagues, evaluating qualities such as guts and proper character.

In some individual interviews, however, some caseworkers expressed discomfort about the current work orientation, such as:

> Now, it's the sickness benefit rate that should go down […] . We should be tougher in our assessments. I think we are already at 9.0 something here. But we are supposed to reduce it even more. And that's all that is talked about: statistics.
>
> (Caseworker)

However, such objections were never raised, or discomfort expressed, in the collective setting we observed—the workplace meetings or team meetings—but

only in the individual interviews. This attests to the strong pressure to conform to the current normative order of this agency.

Concluding discussion

This chapter has considered the SIA as a specific narrative environment with privileged stories. It focused on the role that storytelling plays in shaping SIA caseworkers as organizational subjects. As we saw, the stories did not just convey organizational priorities and shape the views of caseworkers in relation to their clients and case management, but more fundamentally shaped their aspirations and strivings, including what they felt was satisfying and rewarding at work. Most of the caseworkers experienced and displayed satisfaction in aligning their performance with current targets ('9.0') and scripts (such as 'improved insurance wiseness'). Such work orientations and feelings about work were reinforced in the collective processes, such as in teamwork and the office meetings. By retelling the stories produced by management and reiterating the accompanying scripts, the caseworkers enforced those outlooks and rationales in their daily collegial interactions (see also Jacobsson & Hollertz 2021). The practice of confession—of having believed in and practiced 'old' truths—as well as experiences of being awakened to new insights and perspectives, attest both to the normative pressure *and* the willingness of subjects to re-create themselves to achieve self-improvement. They seek to be or become caseworkers that have what it takes to work at the SIA, thus developing the appropriate subjectivities.

It was suggested that such narrative shaping of subjectivity results from the 'storying' of experience. The SIA staff members retold—and reinterpreted—their own experiences using the discursive templates and narrative logic provided by the organizational discourse. Stories help shape subjectivities by 'formatting' experience along with the discursive templates, and by achieving cognizance in relation to individual lived experience. It was argued that it is in the interplay between organizational narratives (and discursive templates) and the individual's experience that subjectivities were produced.

The moulding of new subjectivities required destabilization of the caseworkers' previously held beliefs about themselves and their work. The organizational narratives were key in achieving both this destabilization and re-subjectification (see also Benson 2008; Bergström & Knights 2006). Leadership by coaching and collegial reflections in the teams—as guidance through conversations—allowed the caseworkers to discover new truths not only about the clients but also about themselves and their qualities as caseworkers. Pieces of these truths could then be incorporated into their subjectivities. The discursive templates aided in these self-inventory practices and the subsequent processes of subjectivity formation, in which the individuals actively participated. As Rose argued, 'In compelling, persuading and inciting subjects to disclose themselves, finer and more intimate regions

of personal and interpersonal life come under surveillance and are opened up for expert judgement, and normative evaluation, for classification and correction' (Rose 1989: 244). The social processes and style of leadership by coaching enabled an openness to such disclosure and experiences of 'awakening', alerting caseworkers to new aspects of themselves as well as the clients. The fact that individuals' subjectivity is malleable in this respect does not mean that it will be necessarily completely transformed as a result of such interventions. Nevertheless, certain aspects of the discourses and narratives, targeting individuals' self-understanding, may still be picked up and incorporated into peoples' self-images (Sunnerfjell 2020; Sunnerfjell & Jacobsson 2018). We saw that the moral message conveyed in the stories tended to 'stick', despite a certain ambivalence about the general policy direction.

To conceive of subjectivity as malleable in this way is not to suggest that subjectivity is fabricated by the will of others. The crucial insight by Foucault is that individuals participate in the constitution of their own subjectivity (e.g. Foucault 1997): a process that can be more or less reflexive. As Alvesson and Willmott argued, the role of discourse in targeting and moulding the human subject is balanced with other elements of life history (Alvesson & Willmott 2002: 622). The more newly employed staff were inclined to 'buy into' the current management discourse, and thus were more malleable, than some more experienced staff, who were more ambivalent. One of those 'long-timers' told us that she was just trying to survive in the organization until the next management shift.

We can conclude that stories shape the subjectivities in organizations but some stories 'stick' better than others. How organizationally transmitted stories 'land' in caseworker self-understanding and subjectivity depends on social processes in the workplace, as well as the interplay with individual experience. In addition, organizational factors and constraints may also condition individuals' inclination to 'buy in'. In the case of the SIA, the staff turnover is high, and the case load and time constraints on caseworkers are significant, in combination with the difficult nature of the cases—admitting or declining benefits for people suffering from ill-health—were conditions conducive to being 'storied'. Organizational stories served as heuristic devices helping caseworkers to prioritize their work and legitimize their priorities, while simultaneously shaping their view of themselves and the world.

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4   Swedish Police Reform and the Emergence of New Police Subjectivities

Bertil Rolandsson

Introduction

New Public Management (NPM) reforms are said to erode the local legitimacy of public authorities (Adler et al. 2008). In an attempt to counter such negative consequences, a new set of reforms are currently engaging public professionals collaborating across organizational boundaries with local providers of public services (Evetts 2011; Kirkpatrick & Noordegraaf 2015). In these reforms, professionals' responses and practical understanding of collaborative relation management have become increasingly crucial (Anteby et al. 2016). By providing opportunities for professional subjects to organize their collaboration independently based on their own expertise (Noordegraaf 2020), such reforms set out to strengthen local professionalism, thereby making public services sensitive to citizen needs (Bringselius 2019). Nevertheless, co-ordination of local practices continues to be guided by governmental procedures (Kerr 1999), and public reforms draw on increasingly centralized modes of policy-making to facilitate central governance (Christensen & Laegreid 2007; Holmberg 2019) while simultaneously paving the way for independent professional initiatives sensitive to local needs. As a consequence, public officials must not only govern themselves in relation to managerial rationalities concerning national conformity but also simultaneously organize independent local collaborations to move closer to the citizens.

To understand how such post-NPM reforms unfold in practice, forging occupational subjects characterized by certain considerations and needs (Dean 2008:12), this chapter examines how a specific group of officials—Swedish police officers—conceive of themselves and their conduct of work during the post-NPM reform. More precisely, it considers how they view their ability to act independently as knowledgeable subjects (Wain 1996) in the collaborative arrangements resulting from the Swedish police reform initiated in 2015.

In line with post-NPM reforms in general, the Swedish police reform introduced a variety of measures to underpin cross-organizational collaboration, intended to strengthen local police officers' ability to respond to local

needs. A range of measures rely, in particular, on an enhanced local mandate to collaborate with other municipal authorities. Local police officers are expected to influence how the authorities solve problems and organize their practices in a way that is 'closer to the citizens' (BRÅ 2018; cf. Larsson & Lundgren-Sørli 2018; Statskontoret 2018; SOU 2019:43). At the same time, the reform has enhanced national policy co-ordination by centralizing the management structure. In 2015, the 21 regional police authorities constituting the Swedish police were reorganized into a single national police authority with seven regions, each consisting of several police areas. Each police area is in charge of a set of extended local police districts.

The chapter takes a Foucauldian perspective, recognizing that this type of reform grants authority to local initiatives through organizational measures that constitute 'technologies of domination of others and those of the self' (Foucault 1997:25). Hence, the police authority governs through individual officers by providing them with organizational means and measures as well as by urging them to reflect on how to be sensitive to local needs and recognition. In other words, the reform allows individual police officers to engage in local collaboration. Their conduct is shaped by various forms of institutionalized control (Wain 1996). As argued below, their responses to efforts to shape their conduct, in turn, shape their concepts of themselves, their work, and their capability to 'move closer to the citizens'.

The analysis in this chapter, therefore, centres on the ways in which local police officers understand the means and measures intended to shape their conduct (Foucault 1982). It is important to emphasize their responses to and practical understanding of how collaborative relations are managed (cf. Anteby et al. 2016), rather than viewing the reform as (only) the top-to-bottom implementation of new administrative procedures. Therefore, this chapter highlights local officers' creativity and concerns about local collaboration. To understand how police officers perceive themselves as knowledgeable subjects, capable of managing local collaboration creatively while simultaneously handling centralized policy concerns, it is necessary to consider their responses to the Swedish police reform. This concerns whether and how they adjust, adapt, or even resist official measures to move their services closer to the citizens (cf. Foucault 1982; Wain 1996:358). In this process, it is crucial to identify and examine their experiences of tension and concerns that clearly demand their attention.

Method and materials

This analysis of police officers' responses to the Swedish police reform draws on semi-structured interviews with 39 police officers. Several of the interviewees had acquired new positions or roles introduced to encourage police engagement with local communities. Others were local inspectors, investigators, or police managers' co-ordinating budgets and policy at the regional

level. Furthermore, the interviewees represented various police districts comprising different conditions for local police work, including inner cities, districts struggling with high crime rates, socially stable medium-sized cities (50,000–100,000 inhabitants), and rural police districts. During the interviews, the police officers were encouraged to elaborate on how the police reform conditioned local collaboration. Interview transcripts were coded by identifying and naming various collaborative activities. To examine the aims and measures characterizing the reform, the analysis also included documents concerning operational plans and instructions for local police practices (e.g. so-called promises and agreements with the municipalities), as well as those emanating from the central administration (e.g. public reports, national policy documents, national instructions for local police work, and evaluations). By identifying codes and the relationships between them, the analysis defined themes reflecting respondents' perceptions of themselves in their inter-organizational collaboration with other local actors (Miles et al. 2014). Examination of how the officers addressed tension, which conditioned their collaboration and the measures introduced by the reform, also allowed deeper analysis of their conceptualizations of their own agency.

The following section begins by outlining some of the organizational components of the reform that shape their professional choices and needs (Dean 2008:12). This first part of the chapter emphasizes the conditions for local policing provided by organizational governance and measures. The second section continues by focusing more closely on individual police officers, describing how they respond to different measures and the strain related to the reform (Rose 1999), which prompts their strategy of being collaborative subjects sensitive to local needs and recognition. The third section identifies and discusses variation in police officers' self-conceptions as strategizing subjects as they address new organizational demands for local collaboration.

The Swedish police reform

As mentioned above, the 2015 Swedish Police reform established a single national police authority, that is, a centralized management structure to replace the former 21 regional police authorities (cf. Christensen & Laegreid 2011; Björk 2021). However, the reform also introduced new forms of cross-organizational collaborations involving other local actors with the purpose of strengthening the ability of the police to respond to local needs and work 'closer to the citizens' (cf. Larsson & Lundgren-Sørli 2018; Statskontoret 2018). Central measures to enhance collaboration with other local actors are *collaboration agreements* in which the police and the municipality agree to address certain local challenges and crimes together, *public promises* by the police to the local community to achieve explicit goals (e.g. to increase the number of prosecutable drug crimes or include parents in crime prevention work), and *citizen dialogues* enabling individuals and actors in the local

community to influence the content of public promises. In combination with *co-worker dialogues,* allowing the local police to discuss how to turn public promises into practice, these measures were intended to bolster local professionalism and thus improve police services in a manner that was closer to the citizens. The national committee in charge of outlining the content of the reform predicted that it would enable police work and services to be 'close to the citizens':

> The core activities of the police authority shall be carried out close to the citizens. Citizens should feel safe where they live and stay. By preventing, intervening in, or investigating crimes and maintaining the social order, the police authority contributes to the security of citizens and maintains trust in the rule of law. One of the most important starting points for the Swedish police reform is to strengthen the local presence and accessibility. The organization must be built from below and reflect how funds are distributed within the organization. The local police area shall form the basis for the police authority's activities, and the goal shall be that more than half of a police region's activities are conducted in the local police area. A large part of the crimes are to be investigated in the local police area, close to the citizens, by investigators who know the local problems.
>
> (Implementation Committee for the new Police Authority, Decision on the main features of the Police Authority's detailed organization, 2014)

This quote stresses the importance of rebuilding the police organization from the bottom, but to enable the police to move closer to the citizens, the committee continued by pointing out that collaboration with the municipalities was crucial to the police aim of enhancing sensitivity to local needs. A range of organizations may then be subjects for collaboration, but it is through agreements and engagement with the municipalities that the police seek to establish collaboration involving a set of generally stable routines for information sharing involving a variety of actors. The committee explains:

> The local collaboration with the municipalities and other actors must be developed. By applying this decision, the reform creates the organizational conditions for achieving a redistribution of resources to the local police areas. It is the task of the regional police chiefs to ensure that the selected organization leads to strengthened local police activity in terms of presence and availability. The overall responsibility, as well as short and quick decision making, creates opportunities for the head of the local police area to adapt the operations to local needs and conditions. Having a police function in the local police area with special responsibility to drive the work with the municipalities and the local community in general strengthens the citizens' influence. Furthermore,

citizen influence is strengthened through the collaboration agreements and public promises that are to be developed between the municipalities and the police authority.

<div align="right">(Implementation Committee for the new Police Authority,
Decision on the main features of the Police Authority's
detailed organization, 2014)</div>

The quote states that the municipalities play a central role in police definitions and communication of so-called *public promises* to citizens and other local actors. Further underscoring the importance of municipal collaborators, the reform also introduces a new position, so-called community officers (Kommunpolis), to co-ordinate police engagement with the municipalities. These officers are supported by inspectors (Områdespolis) responsible for maintaining daily contact with neighbourhood watch groups, local housing associations, shop owners, and other parties in specified areas in each police district, thereby strengthening recognition of the police as a local authority. The community officers and inspectors interviewed reported spending considerable time communicating and negotiating local priorities with various organizations, in particular municipal units (BRÅ 2018). A new national unit developing national guidelines for collaboration with municipalities also confirms that this is a major part of their work. This unit does not claim to provide directives but supports local police officers with methods and guidelines to organizing collaboration with the municipalities, in tasks such as setting up citizen dialogues or conveying public promises. These guidelines remind them of their organization's goals and methods, thus constituting technologies that encourage officers to consider how they align local police work with the overall police managerial structure (Rose 1999). The guidelines indicate that local management should use so-called co-worker dialogues to maintain individual officers' attention to resources and need for organizational goals while remaining sensitive to local needs. The strategic importance of these co-worker dialogues also becomes clear if we look closer at the national guideline for linking dialogues with the public promises of the local police:

> Co-worker dialogues affect the local situation of the police and are mandatory for producing citizen promises. The dialogues aim to utilize the employees' competence by involving them in creating a basis for decisions and implementing decisions. The dialogue is carried out on at least two occasions: at the beginning and at the end of the process. The first dialogue focuses on the local situation—WHAT—and the second dialogue on activity planning—HOW.

<div align="right">(Police national method support/Knowledge-based work with
citizen promises in collaboration)</div>

As stated above, the co-worker dialogues enable officers to link planned activities to public promises made in dialogue with the municipalities.

Recognizing realistic initiatives in relation to resources and priorities within the police organization, the dialogues involve local action plans and crime statistics. The co-worker dialogues have thus become a means to identify legitimate resolutions between external expectations that emerge owing to local collaboration and the internal measures defined and shared among the police. In other words, these dialogues allow police officers to negotiate compromises between what local collaborators expect and what the police believe they can do.

The new demand for constant moderation

The police officers interviewed describe the new tasks of establishing collaboration agreements with municipalities and making public promises to them every one or two years, as well as having to consider the input from concerned citizens during *citizen conferences.* These are arranged with the municipalities and entail constant moderation of external demands. Furthermore, they describe how in the next step, agreements with and promises to local actors must be anchored in their own organization through constant moderation. In this continuous process of moderation, community officers responsible for co-ordinating collaboration with the municipalities are key actors. In many interviews, these officers reported viewing their role as facilitating communication with wider society, but avoided describing themselves as managers. Nevertheless, they are often part of the local management team, feeding back input from citizen conferences, municipalities, and other local collaborators to the co-worker dialogues and other local planning activities. One community officer from an urban police district explained:

> I also think it is very important for them to understand our role, so the group leaders do not wonder what the community police officers are doing up there. They should feel that we work for them or we all work toward the same outcome in our district. So, there are four teams here in this district—four so-called PP teams, or period planning teams, and in each period planning team there are four groups. And we meet one team every other week all the time to understand how they feel and what they do; then we reach a general decision on what they should do in the future, eight weeks ahead, i.e. activities corresponding with our activity plan and the strategic part. Then we usually become nerds, stating that we will take care of the 'climate' in the district and the others should care for the 'weather', i.e. the situation. We keep watch, trying to figure out how we may get a better climate in our neighbourhood, and the weather comes and goes in any case. But they get better weather every day, so maybe it will soon be a better climate as well.

By describing their own tasks metaphorically as long-term engagement with the climate, while officers that manage daily incidents are engaged

with constant changes in the weather, this community officer underscores their role in forwarding strategic input from their collaborators to the police authority and field officers. Other community officers interviewed also justified their function by describing their strategic input into co-worker dialogues, planning activities, or meetings with police officers in charge of local units, enabling them to evaluate daily activities. By describing evaluations as professional discussions about aligning ongoing initiatives and the activity plan with external expectations, some also downplay the importance of the formalized goals that were typical of previous NPM reforms. Instead of designating certain activities as goals that become ends in themselves, they apply their competence in widespread and informed talks, allowing them to continuously identify and adjust measures, thus providing moderated police professionalism 'closer to the citizens'. At the same time, the police officers report that the moderation procedures are challenging and concern police officers who must seek compromises that respond to or even lower the expectations of collaborating partners.

Fostering a strategic mind-set

In general, then, officers indicate in interviews that they can act rather independently from central police management in their relations with local collaborators. They strive to establish local agreements and public promises, adjusting both others' expectations and their own work practices. Instead of introducing new routines, the reform has decentralized the mandate to take the initiative in collaboration with local partners, by encouraging police officers to act in ways that remind us of Simon's (1997) *administrative man*, doing whatever is appropriate to perform organizational functions and meet goals. Accordingly, the police interviewees also appear to be subjects, entitled to draw on their own expertise while discussing strategies for independent translations of knowledge and standards to the needs and features of the local situations and others' expectations (Noordegraaf 2020). One community officer explained how this extended mandate unfolds in practice:

> And now, we do not have to tell anyone else how many alcohol tests we have done, etc.; we do not have the follow-up requirements. The only thing we really need to tell the senior manager is … can we carry out what we judge to be our mission or can we not? If we cannot, why can't we? So, there is a type of continuous risk and impact assessment for our business. It's more a matter of following up where we are now, and that makes it all more fun, when we all follow up for our own sake…. looking at operative methods… do they work; do they not work? We build our own knowledge banks, we set our own goals as well as the activities we do, and then—then we can decide ourselves. Even if we may lack resources, and it must be damn correct when we decide to do something.

The community officers underscore that they are not guided by the same type of rigid objectives as earlier. They have a mandate to negotiate goals both within their own organization and in collaboration with their local external partners. However, as the above-mentioned officer implies, this type of change also fosters concerns, and police officers repeatedly report finding the demand for strategic moderation challenging. In particular, they must be careful and only define goals and measures that are feasible; they do not want to end up with outcomes such as public promises that they cannot keep owing to a lack of resources, thereby disappointing their local collaborators, or face conflicts with other police priorities. More precisely, it is important to apply a strategic mindset characterized by prudence. One inspector described it as taking care of the relations with external collaborators while not 'promising too much'.

> …you have to be very careful when you have citizen dialogues and avoid promising too much. You may promise the local boating association that this year we will really invest; we will be there for you. Because we know what it means to them… but it can be ruined so easily, and 'whoops!' you end up breaking your promise/…/ For instance, once we promised that we would take action against Gypsy cabs, and we had this officer who really invested time and even engaged with the tax authority, the enforcement officer and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. And then one day, we suddenly got the order 'No, there will be nothing, because we have to prioritize this football match'. The Tax Agency had already rescheduled their activities and everything, and this guy had to talk to them a couple of times. In the end he said that 'I will not do this anymore. I am ashamed. I will not put up with this again; it is enough!'

By stressing that the responsible officer felt ashamed, the inspector quoted above points out that external collaboration entails certain anxiety. To maintain a sense of engagement and avoid shame, officers must be able to moderate expectations strategically and reach compromises with external collaborators, thereby resolving tensions between external expectations, organizational goals, and routines. By being alert and constantly considering what is possible, as well as adjusting goals while managing collaborators' expectations, officers may maintain a reputation for reliability in the eyes of their collaborators and the local community. However, strategic moderation of collaborators' expectations is a challenging task. For example, one police officer described having to deal with competing expectations even among the collaborating actors:

> Imagine this. I have an association of adults trying to bring a sense of safety to the neighbourhood, and they have been out on the streets at night a couple of times. Every time we have these types of associations, it is also about grants and premises, and now this housing company

has promised them for six months that they will get these premises or location where they can gather, and all of a sudden they change their mind. Then this chairman of the association calls me and says 'you are the local police, and we have been out here and we have supported you; now would you not be able to call this housing company and make sure that we get this room?'. But 'no', this is not possible of course. This association is a great force, but here we end up having to tell them that it is not possible. I would never make that call; if I do, how will that collaboration be later?

The police officer stressed that it was difficult to temper and adjust the many different expectations of the police, and it demands a certain caution. Accordingly, the police officers interviewed see themselves as strategic actors continuously moderating their relations with collaborators, rather than exclusively as crime fighters (Fyfe 2013; cf. Noordegraaf 2020). With the reform, they face demands to be strategic moderators aware of managerial and wider organizational goals while creatively establishing measures negotiated in collaboration with local partners. Inspired by scholars like Whittington (1996), we may describe them as strategizing subjects exposed to managerial demands moderated in internal co-workers' dialogues and demands by external collaborators such as municipal units whose expectations they also need to moderate.

Fostering apprehensive police subjects

It is important to notice that when the police officers become strategizing subjects, increasingly moderating goals and expectations, they often express anxiety. This means that rather than being a paralyzed bundle of nerves, they emerge as apprehensive or concerned police officers. As mentioned above, post-NPM reforms were intended to enhance opportunities for officials to respond to local needs by extending their mandate to engage independently in local collaboration (BRÅ 2018; Statskontoret 2018). The stipulated means for moving closer to the citizens demanded strategically minded officers capable of responding to tensions between collaboration with local partners and organizational control. Both co-worker dialogues and direct collaboration with the municipal units remind the officers to consider the resources available in moderating goals or promises so that they are feasible. Nonetheless, strategic moderation also appears to be a difficult task in itself, fostering impatience and anxiety about failing to be sensitive to local needs. One police manager explained that the community officers struggle:

There is a dilemma here. If we look at the police promises, it has been tough for the community officers to sell that concept to the municipalities. Because after all we want to work together with the municipalities, and then many municipalities say, 'but we have no time for that, we

have been involved in developing the local collaboration agreements, but these promises to the citizens, we are not interested in them'.

While it is crucial that the police do not promise too much, the police manager quoted above pointed out that they also struggle to persuade some municipalities to participate in police work with the so-called promises to the public. During the implementation of the police reform, the public promises were described as one of the main means to enable the police to 'move closer' to citizens. The need for the police to spend time on persuading collaborative partners to participate and tempering their partners' expectations emerged as an issue in the interviews. Rather than officers being able to become part of daily life in the local community, strategic measures such as promises, citizen dialogues, and collaboration agreements consumed considerable time and energy. Fearing the potential shame of failing to meet their collaborators' expectations, they describe how they developed a strategic mindset to respond to the above-mentioned organizational tensions. Confirming their anxiety over possible failure, a national evaluation of the reform reported that this type of tempered or strategic engagement with local communities does not always mean that the police actually move closer to the citizens by becoming part of their daily lives.

> Development of municipal co-operation, the citizen dialogues and the citizen promises appear to mean that the police indirectly get closer to the citizens. It is also clear that everyone strives for the same goal. The conditions for fulfilling citizen promises and commitments to the municipality are perceived to be limited as a result of the local police area's resources being largely event driven. The available external resource is mainly controlled by the regional command centres (RLC) and the workload allows little time for other than event-driven work. It is perceived as a risk that expectations are created among citizens and politicians—expectations that risk not being met.
> (National Police Chief's Office, Situation of the reorganization, Tertial 2, 2016:13)

This quote explicitly states that there is a lack of resources to satisfy the expectations of citizens and local politicians. The lack of resources and largely event-driven nature of police work make the aim of moving closer to the citizen difficult to fulfil. However, the evaluation concludes that the police are still—indirectly—sensitive to local needs. This emphasis on indirect relations obviously raises questions about what moving police work closer to the citizens actually means. The findings reported in this chapter show that increased emphasis on the need for such indirect relations fosters anxiety among police officers. By engaging officers in collaboration with municipalities and the co-worker dialogue as well as by introducing citizen promises, the police may improve relations with local communities. This requires

local police officers to engage more extensively with local police strategies, in turn creating increasingly apprehensive police subjects constantly moderating strategic relations with local communities.

Anxiety producing cynical or pragmatic police subjects

By turning themselves into strategizing subjects, the police officers internalize a sort of managerial awareness, repeatedly moderating goals and external expectations. Rather than acting as the local police officer whom everyone knows and who is part of the local community, officers that sought to move closer to the citizens must occupy themselves with goals and demands for formalized modes of local strategizing. In line with recent studies by Terpstra et al. (2019) investigating Dutch and Scottish police officers exposed to similar reforms, we find that police officers are increasingly engaged with 'abstract' policing based on decontextualized measures rather than personal experience. Instead of taking an active part in the daily practicalities of the local community, tension between demands for local engagement, routines, and targets forces them to engage more with abstract assessments of organizational strategy (Terpstra & Fyfe 2014). Referring to general visibility targets motivated by citizen surveys, one local police manager explained how this type of abstract strategy bothers their conscience and causes concern over local engagement priorities.

> We have talked about the fact that it has become super, super clear in these citizen surveys that it is visibility that counts; people want a police officer who is visible. We have talked about it, and yes, it is good to have visibility, but we have to be available as well, and we have a huge area to cover, and usually we just have one car working at a time. And then, there are many on the staff who are bothered by their conscience and feel that 'it was a long time since we went over to that place' and then they go there. You may even go to five such spots of troubled conscience, spending time in the car driving long distances. Still, we have talked about that instead of being visible, spending time on getting attention from someone having coffee at the kitchen table and possibly watching out just as we pass by in our police car… Yes, we are visible… maybe we are lucky then that they see us. However, it is perhaps better that we go to three of these places and step out of the car and have a short stint of traffic control. Or that we go from the petrol station to a local grocery store, walking slowly and showing that we are not in a hurry to get anywhere, stopping by and talking to people.

There are variations in how the interviewees sense and respond to difficulties in applying their local strategies, but they all reported that this type of 'abstract' police work is rather challenging, in many cases fostering frustration and anxiety over failure to move 'closer to the citizens'. One police

manager of a region comprising several police districts also stated that the tension between organizational control and local expectations had become too extensive. Referring to the centralized managerial structure and the geographical extension of local police districts, he claimed that the reform rather moves the Swedish police further away from the citizens. Several interviewees also managed their frustration and sense of failure by becoming cynical about the consequences of the reform. One police inspector working in a rural district expressed her cynicism by stating that measures like citizen promises are 'bullshit', primarily draining their local organization of resources. She also pointed out that police cannot specialize in specific measures to enhance local collaboration by strictly applying certain routines. In practice, the rural context demands rather that everyone knows a little bit of everything and can respond to local needs by improvising. Another police inspector, working in an urban police district that has been extended to some rural areas, also expressed cynicism when he described how they ticked off some of their promises to the citizens without actually engaging with the local communities:

> I'm slightly sceptical, I must say. I think the promises we make provide a good forum to gather around, but the question is, what happens when the police sign a promise that you should have traffic controls in that rural area, right? You go down once a week and control traffic in the area, and I do not know if it makes the citizens any damn happier. But when our boss in the station house appears inured enough and says that 'It is enough that we have a police car rolling down the streets every now and then; it will make the citizens safe'. By doing that we have not made an effort; we have not really done anything there. We have shown nothing more than a police presence once a week in the area.

Some of the cynical police officers appeared to be rather exhausted, in particular those patrolling rural areas. Lack of resources and merged local police districts give them extended areas to patrol, making it difficult to be sensitive to local needs. Collaboration in these new local police districts in some cases also involves several municipalities (one of the so-called local districts covers an area about the same size as the Netherlands), making it rather demanding to reach agreements and negotiate promises with all of them. It simply became a challenge to turn the reform into practice, where aims raised in negotiations with local actors smoothly replaced the formalized goals typical of previous NPM reforms. Such challenges explain cynicism among the police officers who reject the public promises, describing them for instance, as 'bullshit'. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that they also describe their adjustment to the reform. Cynicism emerges in combination with despondent adaptation to the reform, for instance, in the cases when they report ticking off public promises.

Nonetheless, other police officers also describe themselves as pragmatic. These more pragmatic police officers still expressed a sense of anxiety, but

they see themselves as knowledgeable police officers capable of implementing the reform. They recognize that the reform fosters tension between organizational conditions and expectations among collaborators, but they still reported their improvisation to make the best of the situation. For instance, some of these officers talked about making use of local agreements and public promises as a negotiation strategy with central management, enabling them to retain resources locally and thereby relieve some of their concern over situations where they could otherwise risk failing to uphold their local capacity because of directives from the centralized management. We may talk about an apprehensive pragmatism guiding the police officers in these cases. One community officer explained it thus:

> … we have had several co-worker dialogues, and we have done it by the book. Now we are about to sign an agreement with the municipal board; the municipality is on board. We have never had any problems with them. But all the promises we have made here now have been based on the assumption that we would at least have 10, 13 or more police officers dedicated to specific parts of the city, but there will be four of us, so there is a very high risk here that the police will be criticized for introducing this whole process with new public promises, and then in the end being unable to deliver. It's devastating! Among other things, we have said that we will increase the number suspected of drug crimes among the citizens in the age range of 18–25 years, but we have less resources to do that today. Still, this promise was actually constructed as a way to ensure that the management at the central level of the police area would not let us down in this. The public promise is thus a strategic initiative for the local police, who also recognize the importance of supporting a clear connection to crime prevention activities.

The officer quoted expresses scepticism as well as anxiety concerning the failure to move police work closer to the citizens. Nevertheless, he describes using public promises to prevent local resources (in particular, those linked with crime prevention) from redeployment in the new more centralized police authority, revealing a pragmatic approach whereby they try to make the best of the reform. Other police officers express similar pragmatism, describing extensions of the time frame of public promises by repeating them for two or three years. In this way, they neglect official demands for yearly revisions to maintain continuity in their local initiatives. In relation to residents, some also report attempts to maintain a local presence, for instance, using buses, enabling them to station mobile police offices temporarily in specific neighbourhoods. Yet again, all these police officers express a lingering sense of anxiety and concern. For instance, police initiatives to maintain a temporary local presence raise the fear of residents seeing such solutions as a token effort that in the end only confirms the lack of a permanent police presence. One police inspector describes some reactions from locals.

But I feel that you do not have as much time for the citizens, that you often get the question: 'Has something happened?' And then I do not think that we get a correct picture of society. The police should be part of society, all the time—we should not appear just when something has happened; we should be there all the time. We should be there preventing and acting when it happens, but today you get that question frequently when you appear. We had an initiative in this part of the city last week, and the response was: 'has anything happened?' 'No, nothing special, it's just that we have a few more police officers.' But it's like—they think it's like, 'Yeah, are you looking for bombs? And is it a terrorist?'. Their reactions are reaching such proportions.

We should keep in mind that both cynical and pragmatic police subjects moderate the expectations of collaborators and locals from the police; they all strategize in an attempt to resolve tension in cross-organizational collaboration intended to enhance sensitivity to local needs. In doing so, they seem to be anxious, troubled by their consciences and concerned about failure. Having identified how the despondent and apprehensive police officers differ, we conclude that they articulate two alternative responses to the reform and the anxiety it causes them in their attempts to move closer to the local community.

Conclusion

This chapter started by pointing out the claims that the Swedish police reform would address the negative consequences of previous NPM reforms, which had eroded the authority's local legitimacy. By providing local police officers with opportunities to organize collaboration across organizational boundaries independently and in accordance with their own experience and expertise (Anteby et al. 2016; Noordegraaf 2020), the reform set out to strengthen local professionalism and thereby make the police more sensitive to local needs (Bringselius 2019). These measures were intended to move the police closer to the citizens. However, this chapter has identified challenges reported by local police officers concerning the local forms of collaboration that have been introduced, which divert them towards 'abstract' and time-consuming assessments of organizational strategy (Terpstra et al. 2019). In this way, the reforms have fostered anxiety over failures to enhance their sensitivity to local needs (cf. Rolandsson 2017, 2019). They conceive of themselves as strategizing subjects with a troubled conscience (cf. Whittington 1996; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007), increasingly occupied by learning how to moderate or resolve tension between organizational resources and local collaborators' expectations of the police.

We may thus conclude that the Swedish police reform has turned police officers into strategizing subjects managing different forms of institutionalized measures and control (Wain 1996). As the reform introduced new

modes of local co-ordination and governmental procedures, shaping their professional choices and needs (Kerr 1999; Dean 2008:12), new and increasingly strategic police subjectivities emerge. In other words, the police officers prove themselves to be malleable; the reform may shape how they conceive of themselves, their work, and their capability to 'move closer to the citizens'. However, in drawing that conclusion, we should keep in mind that these strategizing police officers are also apprehensive subjects, prompted by their own anxiety to reflect on ways to enhance their sensitivity to local needs. The presence of this type of anxiety among police officers, who are officials granted explicit authority and whose orders must be followed, may come as a surprise. The empirical findings indicate that police officers are alarmed subjects responding to the reform with concern; nevertheless, they suggest that the police still possess a certain agency.

Despite the increasingly centralized police authority urging them to align with the new organizations, the police officers attempt to act on their own judgement in relation to a variety of local demands for collaboration, suggesting that these partners also influence the conduct of local police work to some extent. Instead of showing that the reform forges police subjects via an authoritative and straightforward top-down introduction of a new dominant administrative regime (Foucault 1982), the study also detected differences in the responses of police officers to their anxiety over finding ways to establish local collaboration or connect to communities. By recognizing variations in police officers' conceptions of themselves as subjects able to manage a troubled conscience and recurring concerns about failure, we may conclude that differences exist in how this so-called post-NPM reform is implemented by individual officers.

Noting how the Swedish police reform is applied by individual officers, the study identifies two types of strategizing subjects. First, *cynical police subjects* strategize their connections with local collaborators by downplaying their own engagement with some of the above-mentioned measures (collaboration agreements, public promises, citizen dialogues, or co-worker dialogues). In this case, anxiety fosters a combination of cynicism and despondent adaptation to the reform. The unfolding cynicism suggests that resistance may occur among these police officers; at least, they appear to be reluctant to adjust to the reform. Second, *pragmatic police subjects* continue to struggle with troubled consciences and anxiety, but these officers also aim to make the best of their situation. They sense that much is at stake and believe that they may fail to move closer to the citizens, but they still try to apply the new measures introduced by the reform to maintain resources and continuity in local police work.

Although there are differences between these two types of strategizing police subjects, we should keep in mind that agency in both cases depends on the officers' explicit concern about failing. Thus, even if they appear to be less constrained by official targets, they do not believe that the reform provides them with better opportunities to act professionally in the local area;

they adapt to the reform but act as strategizing subjects owing to concerns over the risk of introduced changes hindering their efforts to move closer to the citizens.

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5 Negotiating Subjectivities in Social Work Dialogues

Johan Lindwall

Introduction

Contemporary social work is characterised by the notion of client-centredness (Juhila, Pösö, Hall & Parton 2003; Lauri 2016: 58). Prevailing ideals suggest that good social work is guided by clients' initiatives and goals. Change, it is suggested, starts within clients and is not affected through their being subjected to social workers' expert knowledge or moralising. Social work of the type where professionals use their expertise or superiority to instruct clients on how to live their lives, or worse, to pressure clients to change, is seen as authoritarian and counterproductive. A client-centred approach suggests that social workers and clients should meet as equals, with the former being encouraged to heed and adjust to what clients say. In line with these ideals, dialogue-based interventions and counselling approaches have gained increasing popularity, and their underlying equalitarian ideas have had a significant impact on how social workers' interactions with clients are shaped and structured in modern welfare organisations (Härnbro 2019; Karlsen & Villadsen 2008; Lauri 2016). However, state-sanctioned social work is always oriented towards certain goals, and social workers are employed to discourage certain behaviours in a certain way. As previous research has shown, modern welfare organisations comprise institutional identities according to which clients are comprehended and categorised (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2003). These identities, which are linked to the institutional task and resources at hand, imply notions of causes and solutions to clients' problems, as well as notions of what characterises a help-worthy client (Juhila 2003). Hence, clients must be made to fit into the institutional logic. A challenge for social workers is therefore to make clients adjust to an institutional rationality, not through the latter's passive subjection to the institutional identities at hand, but through subjectification, that is, work that aligns with, rather than works against, client subjectivities and will.

By analysing goal-oriented dialogues between social workers and clients categorised as having substance use problems in Swedish social service agencies, this chapter aims to shed light on how client – but also social worker – subjectivities are shaped and negotiated in social work dialogues. First,

I position contemporary social work ideals within a neo-liberal welfare discourse. This is followed by a discussion of dialogue-based interventions as a governmental technology. In particular, I discuss how dialogue technologies intervene in and shape client and social worker subjectivities, but also how this is achieved through extensive interactional work. My empirical material, how it was collected and analysed, is then described. Thereafter I present two cases of goal-oriented social work dialogues between social workers and clients. The chapter ends with a concluding discussion.

Neo-liberalism and the turn to the client

Social works' "turn to the client" can be traced to the neo-liberal turn in Western welfare work (Mik-Meyer & Villadsen 2013). Central to the neo-liberal welfare discourse are notions of participation and empowerment rooted in ideas of individual freedom, autonomy and choice (Juhila, Raitakari & Hansen Löfstrand 2017). Individual freedom, however, should not be confused with the right to do "as one wishes". As Barry, Osborne and Rose (1996: 8) point out, freedom in modern liberal welfare states refers to a certain kind of "responsibilised" freedom, characterised by a willingness to take personal responsibility for one's future. In the chapter's context, this is equated with a willingness to quit drugs, while a willingness to continue indicates a lack of freedom (Valverde 1998).

   The neo-liberal conceptualisation of freedom is reflected in Western social services in at least two ways. First, it is reflected in social services' mission to promote *certain* lifestyles and discourage other unproductive ways of life. As Villadsen (2003) points out, modern social work seeks to a large extent to "liberate" clients, not only from addictions and inhibitive self-perceptions but also from dependence on welfare support. Hence, to a considerable extent, social work's project can be described as a task to promote a "responsibilised" freedom, and to discourage dependence in a broad sense. Second, it is reflected in an increasing focus on the client's "will". An indisputable trend in social work is the incorporation of dialogue-based interventions that bring client subjectivities and will into focus as the primary interventional site (Rose 1989). "Good" social work evades authoritarian positions and avoids openly acting against the client's will. Rather, it aims to engage and shape the client's own ambitions and motivations through the use of dialogue.

Dialogue-based interventions as a governmental technology

The popularity of dialogue-based interventions is well described in the literature (Härnbro 2019; Lauri 2016, 2019). Clients have increasingly come to be seen as those who can make valid statements about their problems and needs. Clients should "do the talking" (Karlsen & Villadsen 2008), while

social workers should be silent and instead facilitate the client's supposedly genuine talk without imposing their values and goals on them. A range of social work manuals and textbooks have been produced where social workers are urged to engage in "playful", "ethical" or "motivating" dialogues with clients in order to induce them to formulate their own solutions (ibid.). A well-established dialogue-based method is *motivational interviewing* (MI) (Lauri 2016). MI aims to produce change within clients by encouraging them to produce "self-motivating statements" (Miller & Rollneck 2013). Social workers are instructed to avoid confrontations, and instead adjust to the client's resistance and express empathy through active listening. Their silence, however, should not be understood as neutral or absolute, but rather strategically applied to govern the client's talk in line with institutional rationalities:

> The ones who used to speak must learn to administer speech economically and strategically, in such manner that he or she by means of silence urges the previously silenced to speak, and through this taciturn administration ties the speaking to his or her words. A generally applicable method is what is termed "active listening", where the listener returns the speech to the speaker by means of questions or by repeating specifically selected statements from the speaker's discourse, in order to structure and direct the speech in certain directions.
>
> (Karlsen & Villadsen 2008: 347)

By encouraging clients to produce statements, and strategically reflect selected parts back, the client's choices, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of those choices, become evident. In this way, authoritarian positions and argumentations can be avoided. Instead, the argumentation is internalised in the client and can thus be represented as ambivalence. Through this, a platform for self-governance is built.

Dialogue-based methods have previously been analysed as governmental technologies (Amir-Moazami 2011; Härnbro 2019; Karlsen & Villadsen 2008; Lauri 2019). Karlsen and Villadsen (2008) argue that there is a general tendency towards a "dialogisation" of relations of government. In social work, this is reflected in the fact that governmental technologies such as MI are becoming the dominant form of governance. From this perspective, MI can be described as a technology that intervenes in a client's subjectivity to achieve change. Obviously, dialogue-based social work is anything but liberated from power. On the contrary, it is a highly controlling, yet subtle, way of governing and shaping client subjectivities through working with their desires and aspirations. As Rose (1989: 11) puts it, the contemporary way of governing "operates through the delicate and minute infiltration of the ambitions of regulation into the very interior of our existence and experience as subjects".

Identities in social work dialogues

Governmental technologies must always be understood within the rationality in which they are used. They always present the world in certain ways, making certain domains visible. Dialogues in social work "present what they are meant to govern as objects amenable to governmental actions" (Karlsen & Villadsen 2008: 348). When performing "motivational work", social workers have been shown to present the ideal client as (1) someone who takes personal responsibility by acknowledging problems and solutions as individual concerns, and at the same time is able to match their problems to the solutions provided by the social worker; and as (2) someone who is willing and able to calculate advantages and disadvantages and make normatively-desired investments in their future (Härnbro 2019: 198). Social work with clients categorised as having substance use problems is dominated by a "confessional discourse" (Järvinen 2003) where clients' "confessions" are considered a necessary passage before a true and trustworthy commitment to change can be anticipated. Hence, as a governmental technology, goal-oriented social work dialogues with clients categorised as having substance use problems present the ideal client as typified first by a willingness to confess to and acknowledge the substance use as an individual problem; and second by a willingness to take individual responsibility for solving the problem with a solution provided by the social worker.

But governmental technologies always work two ways. Social workers are also made visible in a certain way by dialogue-based technologies, and to a large degree, such technologies present social workers as "facilitators" (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer 2012). Their job is to facilitate the client's talk, not to act as authorities or experts making professional statements or judgements about the clients. The facilitator identity deviates from a traditional social worker identity, where experience and professional knowledge were used to describe the client's "true" problems and needs and, based on this knowledge, to intervene and prescribe the client's path to social health.

Dialogues in action

The programmatic side of dialogue-based technologies, as described in their ideal forms in manuals and textbooks, has been analysed and discussed in the research literature (see, for example, Karlsen & Villadsen 2008). However, manuals and textbooks cannot account for all factors involved in actual interactions. In real-life social work dialogues, all sorts of things need to be taken into account, such as the legal framework, local policies, available resources and current workloads. Social workers report difficulties in complying with manuals and textbooks, and there are limitations as to when and how the technologies can be deployed in their daily practice (Lauri 2016: 154). Nonetheless, social workers say that they embrace and are guided by the "client-centred spirit" (Lindwall 2020: 160–165) permeating

these technologies. But, since they also need to adhere to an institutional logic, this causes fundamental problems.

First, there is the general problem of governing in relation to clients. According to prevailing ideals, clients should do the talking, but yet the social worker's job is not complete until clients express *certain* ambitions. Social workers must often do considerable interactional work to get clients to talk and to govern their talk in institutionally-desired directions. Hence, they still run the risk of "too much governing" and being perceived as overly assertive or controlling. Therefore, keeping Foucault's (1978: 95) famous statement "where there is power, there is resistance" in mind, we can expect clients to engage in resistance even in social work dialogues. Too much governing also carries the risk that clients, insofar as they allow themselves to be governed, merely obey or passively adjust to social workers' recommendations without actually acknowledging their problem and taking individual responsibility to commit to a solution. As dialogue-based technologies govern social workers as well, and because social workers do actually work towards institutionally-determined goals, social workers can also be expected to be tempted to resist the facilitator position and become more directive. Second, there is the domain-specific problem of stigmatisation. Acknowledging a substance use problem and the need for treatment involves committing to an addict identity. In Western culture, such an identity is strongly stigmatised. As Juhila and Abrams (2011) have shown, stigmatising categorisations also tend to arouse client resistance.

Governing a client to produce institutionally preferred narratives or statements is thus anything but a straightforward business. Dialogue-based technologies cannot simply be applied "from above", and there are limits to the malleability of client subjectivities. Social work dialogues are challenging and risky and involve delicate interactional work, where contradictory and sensitive matters need to be balanced, and where both client and social worker subjectivities need to be negotiated.

Negotiating subjectivities in goal-oriented dialogues

In this section, I analyse dialogues between social workers and clients categorised as having substance use problems. The context is Sweden's social services, where a central task for social workers is to *actively* promote change for this category of clients (SFS 2001:453). I make social workers' orientation towards their institutional goal visible through demonstrating how they return, or cling to, institutionally relevant themes – that is, the client's drug use or readiness for change – throughout these dialogues. Their interactional struggle to govern the client's talk towards formulating their problems and solutions in institutionally preferred ways is highlighted throughout the analysis. I show how this includes a highly situated and flexible interactional work where the client's resistance, and the social worker's adjustment in response to this, is crucial with regard to how client subjectivities are being

shaped. I also illustrate how the work includes negotiating client and social worker subjectivities respectively, and that the subjectification of both parties is mutually accomplished in the dialogues.

The material was collected through ethnographic fieldwork conducted at three social services offices in Sweden during 2017 as a part of my doctoral studies. Observations were carried out in a variety of settings and situations, including team meetings and social worker consultations with clients categorised as having substance use problems. In addition, focus groups, reflective discussions and in-depth interviews with professionals were carried out. Transcribed field notes and audio recordings were produced. This chapter is based on transcribed audio recordings of encounters between social workers and clients at two of the social services agencies. In order to show how the interactional process develops, I have selected two cases where the interaction was followed over several sequences. The cases contain both key similarities and important differences. In the first case, the social worker struggles with the "confession" (getting the client to acknowledge a substance use problem). In the second case, the social worker's concern is to make the client express an autonomous and sincere willingness to take individual responsibility for committing to a solution to a substance use problem. Analytically, the chapter draws on conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974). Talk is analysed as performative action and the focus is on turn taking. The most important aspects are how utterances are designed to shape the interactional context for the next speaker and how culturally shared interactional rules are employed to perform interactional actions: for example, to handle delicate issues (van Nijnatten & Suoninen 2014), to persuade (Suoninen & Jokinen 2005), to repair interactional fouls (Scott & Lyman 1968) and to achieve agreement. In the analysis, I attend to the details of conversations, such as overlapping talk and small pauses and hesitations, as these are analysed as consequential for the interaction. Some transcription markers, derived from Jefferson's (2004) extensive glossary, may therefore need explanation:

Underlining	Signals emphasis
[	Marks the start of overlapping talk
=	Indicate no gap between utterances
Informa-	Marks a cut-off
(1.5)	Specifies pauses in seconds
((text in double brackets))	Indicates clarifications inserted by the author

Showing how a governmentality perspective on subjectivity – in particular, the idea of the subject as an interventional site through which power operates (Rose 1989) – in dialogue with microanalysis of actual social work interactions can deepen and nuance analysis of advanced liberal governance, the analysis contributes theoretically to our understanding of subject formation *in situ* in institutional settings.

Case 1: Shaping a troubled identity

First, we meet Sara (social worker) and Paul (client, 33 years old). Paul's contact with social services was initiated by a psychiatrist reporting an "alarming substance use" as Paul was treated in hospital after a suicide attempt. In the last month, Sara has met with Paul two times in order to assess his substance use. The results from her assessment indicate a palpable substance use problem that normally requires treatment. Paul, however, is of a different opinion. He has told Sara that his main concern is his depression and panic attacks. Drugs, he has said, are unproblematic, since they are one of the few sources of joy and well-being in his life, and something that he can control and refrain from when necessary. Sara's view is that Paul underestimates his problems, a conclusion supported by her assessment. As Paul has shared custody of a child, Sara thinks it is even more important that Paul comes to terms with his supposed substance use problem. Sara has told the researcher that, in her opinion, Paul would probably benefit from treatment but, as she says, "he's not there yet". When we enter the conversation, Sara has presented the assessment results to Paul, and she has left the floor to Paul for a response:

    1. Paul: Well, as I said, drugs are not really a problem. It's not like I
    2.   <u>have</u> to use drugs.
    3.   (2.3)
    4. Sara: No?
    5.   (2)
    6. Sara: So, if you don't feel that drugs are something that you need,
    7.   can you tell me more about why you use?
    8.   (1.7)

Paul repeats that he does not perceive his drug use as problematic, through which he explicitly resists being categorised as an addict (Juhila & Abrams 2011). What then happens is of interest. Note how Sara keeps silent for a remarkably long time (line 3). Silence in conversations in places relevant for the next speaker to speak often signals some kind of disagreement (Roberts, Francis & Morgan 2006) and normally pressures the previous speaker for a repair: to develop, modify or account for their prior turn (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977). Sara's silence signals a dissatisfaction with Paul's utterance and functions as an implicit request for a clarification. As Paul does not heed her request, she formulates a "no" (line 4) in a questioning tone which – a little more explicitly still quite subtly – clarifies the request (Suoninen & Jokinen 2005). Paul, however, passively resists Sara's request (Juhila & Abrams 2011) and keeps silent. After another silence, Sara explicitly requests a clarification by asking Paul why he uses drugs. The very fact that Sara, despite Paul's rather unambiguous initial statement, clings to Paul's drug use as a theme, indicates her institutional orientation. But note

how she proceeds – not by arguing that Paul indeed has a drug problem, but by trying to make Paul develop his statement, starting out very subtly, gradually becoming more explicit and finally by formulating a question. Questions are never neutral, but control conversations by offering presuppositions and setting agendas (Hayano 2013). Sara's question governs the conversation towards Paul's drug use as a conversational theme and presupposes that Paul *is actively using* drugs. Sara's question is followed by another silence, indicating that Paul may oppose some element(s) in the question, and Sara continues:

   9. Sara: Is eh- is it- could it be-
10   [like-
11. Paul: [Well, I guess it's more fun when I use but (1)
12.   it's not something that I <u>have to</u> do (1)
13.   It's not like- (4.2) like an addiction or something.
14.   (5)
15. Sara: Mm, more fun you say?
16. Paul: Yeah. (0.5) Life's more fun <u>with</u> drugs than without.

Sara sets out to formulate what looks like a proposal for an answer for Paul to consider (line 9). Note again the graduality in Sara's efforts to govern Paul into talking as she now proceeds to produce suggestions for responses. Proposing explanations for the client's behaviour can be perceived as invasive, however. Sara's hesitations and softening hedges (line 9) indicate that this is a delicate business and on the periphery of standard professional repertoire, but at the same time this *delicacy talk* (van Nijnatten & Suoninen 2014) allows her to proceed without appearing too invasive. Paul, however, interrupts (line 10) before she completes her suggestion. By accounting for his drug use with reference to "having fun", he implicitly resists categorisation as an addict and counteracts the attempted intervention in his subjectivity by orienting himself towards the normalisation of wanting to have fun. He clarifies his initial statement that he neither needs drugs nor suffers from an addiction, by which he explicitly resists Sara's intervention. Another silence follows, signalling that Sara may not fully accept Paul's account, and when she then repeats Paul's account (line 15) (cf. *active listening*, Miller & Rollneck 2013), the focus remains on Paul's drug use and he is pressured to expand on it. Paul, however, once again resists Sara's intervention and sticks to his narrative (line 16).

   The conversation then goes on for a while. Paul says his drug use has never prevented him from working but helped him deal with mental health issues. He is given space to expand on the positive contributions of drugs to his life, and Sara remains non-judgemental and empathic towards Paul's narrative. Encouraging clients to talk about both the positive and negative sides of a behaviour is a way to create discrepancy, and when this discrepancy

becomes internalised in the client, it can be formulated as ambivalence for the social worker to work with. A task for Sara, therefore, is to get Paul to talk about the potentially negative sides of his drug use as well, and when she takes the floor, she says:

17. Sara: So you don't consider this a problem at this point, you say,
18.   in- in itself, so to speak?
19. Paul: No, not directly.
20. Sara: No? Not directly you say?
21. Paul: Exactly.
22.   (3)

Sara's turn is interesting in many ways. In a typical manner, she reflects Paul's self-perception back to Paul (line 17–18). But note the additions "at this point" and "in itself". These additions do not contradict Paul's perception, but still imply the possibility that his drug use may cause him problems later on or lead to secondary problems (cf. *agreements with a twist*, ibid.). Without having to argue, Sara invites Paul to consider the potentially negative aspects of his drug use. Her hesitation and softening hedge (line 18) indicate, however, that this is a risky manoeuvre requiring delicate balancing work (van Nijnatten & Suoninen 2014). Note also how Sara prefaces her turn with "so" (line 17). "So" is a discourse marker that, when used at the beginning of a turn, refers back to something already implied in the conversation (Bolden 2008). Here, the "so" prefacing suggests that her reflection, including her subtly governing additions, are already implied in their conversation, with the effect that they seem less like her own additions and more like already shared knowledge. This tones down the institutional agenda. Paul, however, resists Sara's invitation, but his answer "not directly" (line 19) does not completely rule out the possibility that there may be secondary problems. Sara picks up on this and repeats his formulation as a request for expansion (line 20). But Paul resists Sara's request in a way that looks like an attempt to end the topic (line 21). Another lengthy silence arises, and after a while Sara says:

23. Sara: Okay. So, for example, to abstain
24.   from drugs is- (1) not a big thing for you?
25. Paul: No, it's not.
26.   As I said, I haven't taken anything
27.   when I've been with my child.
28. Sara: No, that's right.
29.   (2)
30.   No, but as we all know it matters
31.   what one does in between too.
32. Paul: Yeah, of course.

The fact that Sara uses the possibilities left open in Paul's response to stick to the theme shows her institutional orientation. In lines 23–24, she introduces the theme "abstaining from drugs" and invites Paul to talk. Abstinence problems are strongly associated with addiction and thus to a stigmatised identity category. It is therefore worth noting how Sara designs her turn. The formulation "not a big thing" (line 24) opens up the possibility that it may still be a small problem, which potentially is easier for Paul to accept. Paul, however, resists Sara's intervention in his subjectivity. He maintains a distance from an addict identity, and as evidence for his case he offers that he is able to abstain from drugs when he is with his child (lines 25–27). At stake in the exchange is Paul's custody of his child, as illegal drug use normally provokes strong reactions from social services when there are children involved. With his formulation, Paul deals with this problem. Sara cannot contradict Paul's response and needs to agree. But what then happens is of interest. With the formulation "as we all know it matters what one does in between too" (lines 30–31), Sara abandons her strategy hitherto of getting Paul to do the talking. Instead, she produces a statement from her own perspective. As Karlsen and Villadsen (2008) say, dialogue-based technologies govern both client and social worker subjectivities, which is why we can expect both parties to perform resistance work. Abandoning dialogue for a position where professional knowledge is used to proclaim what she "knows" can be seen as resistance work where she abandons a "facilitator" subjectivity and orients herself towards a more traditional expert identity. Note, however, that by using the impersonal pronoun "one", her proclamation is generalised. Hence, it is made to apply to everyone – not just Paul – even though it is obvious who she is talking about. Through this phrasing, her acting against Paul's subject becomes less direct, which helps Sara get the message through. Note also the formulation "as we all know", which functions as a reference to common knowledge, and indicates that this is something that Paul is expected to already know (Heinemann, Lindström & Steensig 2011). Through this, Sara's agency is toned down. References to common knowledge also apply pressure for agreement, since not knowing what "everybody knows" is potentially stigmatising, and consequently Paul agrees (line 32).

The conversation then continues. Sara keeps inviting Paul to talk about the negative aspects of his drug use but does not seem to get Paul to produce any substantial negative statements. Instead, Paul repeats his narrative, and as an example, he mentions that he has been able to stay clean since the suicide attempt. Sara picks up on this:

33. Sara: Do you miss the drugs?
34.   (5)
35. Paul: Yes, a little.
36. Sara: You miss them a little?
37. Paul: Yes.

38.   (4)
39. Sara: Okay. Yes, because obviously they're a part of your life, it's not
40.   that you use on rare occasions, it's something that you <u>do</u>,
41.   so to speak.
42.   (1.2)
43. Paul: Well, yeah (0.3) I guess you could say that.

Sara makes use of Paul's earlier statement to formulate a rather direct question as to whether he misses the drugs (line 33). A long silence ensues, and even though we cannot know why Paul's answer is delayed, it is reasonable to assume that Sara's question may have been perceived as highly charged. Given the interactional context, where Sara has pressured Paul for negative narratives regarding his drug use, the question may very well put both Paul's subjectivity and the custody of his child at stake. Finally, Paul admits that he misses drugs, but adds "a little" to his response (line 35). With his response, Paul performs a delicate balancing act. By admitting that he misses drugs, he appears sincere and trustworthy. But through the addition "a little", he still resists an addict identity, since anyone – not just addicts – would probably miss aspects of their lives previously perceived as positive "a little". Still, Paul's answer does not rule out the possibility that there may be something problematic to pick up on, and Sara invites Paul to expand by repeating Paul's formulation (line 36). Paul, however, resists this intervention in his subjectivity, and after a long silence, Sara chooses to formulate her own summary (line 39–41). Again, she abandons the dialogue strategy and produces her own professional interpretation. The shift in strategy signals resistance work against the facilitator subjectivity attributed to her by the dialogue-based technology. But through her turn design, she – just like Paul before her – performs a balancing act. Without letting go of the view that Paul's drug use is more than just occasional, she invites Paul to accept her interpretation – which he, with signs of some reservations, does (line 43) – without having to be subjected, by Sara's intervention, to an addict identity. The turns in the excerpt show how Paul's and Sara's subjectivities have been mutually negotiated in a way that has made it possible for them to reach some kind of consensus that can be used as a platform for continued social work in accordance with the institutional rationality.

Case 2: Moulding a willingness to change

Next, we meet Molly (social worker) and Dan (client, 51 years old). Dan's contact with social services goes way back. He is homeless and, according to Molly, has had severe problems with both alcohol and illicit drugs for a long time. Dan does not deny that alcohol and drugs are a part of his problem, although he is – as Molly puts it – more "ambivalent" when it comes to treatment. According to Molly, Dan is very grateful for social services' efforts to help him. However, he also has a history of "saying yes" to help

offered without engaging or making use of it. He often drops out in the initial phase or never gets started at all. Last time Molly met with Dan was two months ago when he applied for treatment for his substance use problems. A plan was made, including more meetings and visits to different treatment centres, but Dan never completed the plan and was not heard from until he just recently called Molly to schedule today's meeting. According to Molly, Dan is in need of comprehensive treatment to be able to get on with his life. There is, however, a problem regarding the credibility of Dan's willingness to engage in treatment.

   When we enter the conversation, Molly has greeted Dan and emphasised how good it is that he has come to see her. She has also addressed that he applied for treatment last time they met, but since then has not been heard from. Dan has accounted for this by saying that he "can't stick to a plan when things are like they are". He has also said that he understands that "it's much better to tell it like it is" rather than just staying away. However, he "doesn't like to let people down" which is why it is tempting to stay away. Molly has accepted Dan's account, encouraged his sincerity, and assured him that he does not need to be afraid of disappointing her: "My job is to see to <u>your</u> best". She then proceeds:

    1. Molly: So eh- (1.2) I think- what we need to talk
    2.   about is what you <u>want</u>, Dan.
    3.   I think that you need to really think through
    4.   how you actually wanna proceed, if it is
    5.   treatment that you want and what you
    6.   think about your substance abuse in the long run.
    7.   (1)
    8.   Dan: Well I eh- (2) basically I'd like to apply for
    9.   one of those apartments eh- ((independent)) apartments.
    10.   (0.5) Or something like that.
    11.   (2)
    12.   A detox and then some sort of (1) supported apartment.
    13.   (1.5)
    14.   And, you know, see how it works and take it from there.
    15. Molly: Mm?
    16.   (1.3)
    17. Dan: You know eh- (1) I miss being able to lock my own door.

In lines 1–6, Molly establishes Dan's willingness as the focal point of the conversation and as the issue that needs to be addressed. She brings Dan's presumed substance use problems and the possibility of treatment into the conversation but adds that his decision on how to proceed should be well thought through and include a long-term perspective. This implicitly addresses Dan's tendency to say yes to treatment without following through and sharpens the interactional context of Dan's response. Note Molly's

reinforcing words "really" and "actually" which emphasise the importance of taking the issue seriously. Molly's utterance calls for a response, and Dan formulates – with some hesitation – what he wants at this point: an independent apartment (lines 8–10). The following silence is noticeable and indicates some kind of disagreement (Robert, Francis & Morgan 2006). Molly's declining to take the floor pressures Dan for a repair (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks 1977). Hence, he develops and adjusts his previous turn to now include "a detox", "supported apartment" and "take it from there" (lines 12–14). With these additions, his first proposal is renegotiated to include an opening for additional interventions. With this interactional manoeuvre, Dan's subjectivity is negotiated to better fit with what is institutionally preferred, yet he resists an explicit addict identity in need of extensive treatment. Molly, however, urges Dan to further develop his response (line 15) and Dan produces a justifying account (Scott & Lyman 1968) for his apparently ungranted request (line 17) – he wants to be able to lock his own door. With this statement, he orients himself towards a normal identity since this wish should apply to most people. Molly then takes the floor:

18. Molly: Of course. Yes, I can totally understand
19.   your feeling, that you wanna have an
20.   own apartment where you can close the door.
21.   (0.5) And now that you say it yourself,
22.   maybe an ((independent)) apartment is
23.   the right thing. Actually. In the long run.
24. Dan: Yeah.
25. Molly: Because there's also a fairly long queue=
26. Dan: =Mm=
27. Molly: =but yeah, that could be some sort
28.   of long-term plan.
29.   But then of course there's also the question of
30.   how you're gonna work with- (1)
31.   with yourself and with your eh- (0.3)
32.   well your addiction.
33. Dan: Eh- (1) yeah.

Since most people probably want a home of their own, Molly has to confirm Dan's wish (lines 18–20), but note how it is reformulated as a feeling. The reformulation transforms his formulation from an administrative application to an emotional issue to deal with. Note also how Molly, supported by a reference to a "long queue", reformulates Dan's request as a long-term plan. Through this, Dan's request is dismissed as not relevant for the here and now without being rejected as such. By not rejecting Dan's request – but rather confirming it, albeit as a long-term plan – Molly avoids confrontation which makes it easier for her to govern the conversation towards the institutionally relevant issue, and on lines 27–32 she implicitly reintroduces

treatment – formulated as "work with yourself and your addiction" – as a conversational theme. The fact that Molly reintroduces the theme makes her institutional orientation apparent. Still, this governing of the conversation is risky for more than one reason. First, it deviates from the client-centred ideal that permeates the dialogue technology since it is Molly who introduces the theme. Thus, it signals a negotiation of the facilitator's subjectivity and an act of resistance to how the dialogue technology governs her interactional style. Second, introducing the theme is a powerful intervention in Dan's subjectivity which implicitly subjects Dan to a stigmatised institutional identity – an addict in need of treatment – which may arouse resistance (Juhila & Abrams 2011). Note that Molly's utterance presumes *that* Dan needs to work on himself and his addiction. How Molly proceeds is therefore worthy of attention. Note, for example, her hesitations and delicate use of language when mentioning "addiction" (lines 27–32). Note also the epistemic adverb "of course". With this addition, Molly's agency is toned down and Dan's proposed need to work on himself is established, not as Molly's opinion, but rather as something obvious that Dan already should be aware of (Heinemann, Lindström & Steensig 2011). Through this interactional work, Molly's subjectivity is negotiated in a way that makes it possible to communicate her professional assessment of Dan without appearing to be insensitive or too authoritarian. The presumptions in Molly's turn design become part of the context in which Dan needs to make a response. Although with some hesitation (line 33), Dan seems to accept Molly's assessment, and Molly proceeds:

```
34.  Molly: So eh- (1) if I ask you again what your thoughts on treatment-
35.         eh- (1) where do you stand at the moment- (0.5) well- in
36.         relation to the application that you've made?
37.         (5)
38.  Dan:   Well I- (0.3) looking at the big picture I'm thinking eh- (2.5)
39.         that we're talking a very short period of my life.
40.  Molly: Mm?
41.  Dan:   So eh- (1) so why not try?
42.         (2.7)
43.  Dan:   And now as summer's coming- and summer for me is like-
44.         you know- I don't value it anyway the way I live.
45.         (1)
46.         I never go to the beach or (1) you know, do the usual stuff.
47.         (1)
48.  Dan:   So eh (0.7) why not? I think it's a good idea.
49.  Molly: Mm?
50.  Dan:   Yeah, I probably need to get away to get some rest.
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Molly's question (lines 34–36) governs Dan into talking about his readiness for change. Note how Molly holds Dan responsible for his talk about

treatment last time they met. It is here worth keeping in mind that Dan makes his response in an interactional context where he has been implicitly subjected to an addict identity in need of treatment. Hence, to simply say yes to treatment implies accepting such an identity. On the other hand, in order to reject a need for treatment, he must openly resist Molly's assessment and intervention; something that normally requires extensive repair work. Dan's response is therefore interesting. First, he makes the length of the treatment relevant in order to make the point that it is a relatively short period in his life (line 39). He uses this point to make the concluding statement "so why not try?" (line 41). He expands his response by making his indifferent attitude towards summer pertinent as a reason for treatment (lines 43–46). He repeats "why not?" before concluding that "it's a good idea" (line 48) and that he probably needs to get away "to get some rest" (line 50). First, note Dan's concluding utterance "so why not?". Designed as a question, the conclusion does not unequivocally commit him to entering treatment. Furthermore, his utterance about not valuing summer appears more as a general reflection than a strong desire for treatment. In a similar way, the formulation "getting away to get some rest" hardly indicates a strong willingness to seriously commit to a work with oneself. Finally, the formulation "it's a good idea" certainly expresses a positive orientation towards treatment, but still retains it as an idea rather than an actual impending facticity to engage in. Dan's response can be read as resistance work against Molly's intervention in his subjectivity, as well as against the implications of the treatment for him. Still, he has, in fact, presented himself as someone who is positive towards the idea of treatment, and by this he has negotiated his subjectivity in relation to what is institutionally preferred and potentially can serve as a platform for continued social work. However, by accounting for his willingness to engage in treatment by making normalising references to a need to "get away to get some rest" and to his attitude towards summer, he has resisted being openly subjected to an addict identity. His subjectivity has thus proved to be malleable, but not without limits and resistance. However, there is the remaining problem of reliability. According to Molly, Dan has a history of saying yes and making up treatment plans without following through. The numerous silences that appear when Dan develops his response, where Molly potentially could have responded, indicate that she's not fully satisfied with Dan's reasoning. Hence, Molly proceeds:

51. Molly: I'm thinking-
52.   what we can do at this point
53.   is to look at some treatment centres
54.   and see if eh-
55.   but it's very important Dan
56.   that this is something that <u>you</u> feel is right,
57.   that it's something that you <u>wanna</u> do.
58.   You say you don't wanna let <u>me</u> down but you know

59.   it's not <u>me</u> who can be let down. Do you understand?
60. Dan: Yeah.
61. Molly: We'll always be here for you.
62.   (1.5)
63.   But if you want- what we can do now
64.   is to make a couple of visits ((to treatment centres)),
65.   think a little and sort of get used to the idea, okay?

In Molly's next turn, she too downplays the degree of Dan's commitment. Rather than simply accepting Dan's "yes" and rushing to get him in treatment as soon as possible, she proposes a process including looking at different treatment options and, more importantly, gives Dan the opportunity to think the whole thing through and get used to the idea. Throughout her turn, she once again places Dan's willingness and individual responsibility in focus by which Dan's supposed unreliability is implicitly addressed. Through this, her institutional agenda is toned down; nonetheless it is made visible in how she actively governs Dan's subjectivity towards shaping a "willingness" to take individual responsibility for solving his problems in accordance with the institutional rationality – not just subjecting himself to her will. Through extensive interactional work, including negotiations between both Dan's and Molly's subjectivities, they have come to a mutual agreement from where they can proceed.

Concluding discussion

In this chapter, I have analysed two cases of goal-oriented social work dialogues. In the first case, the social worker struggles to get a client to acknowledge a substance use problem. In the second case, the social worker's concern is to get a client to express his autonomous willingness to take individual responsibility for the solution to his substance use problem. Through showing how the social workers cling, or return, to themes regarding the client's drug use or treatment needs, I have pointed out their institutional orientation towards countering drug use. I have shown how a client-centred ideal permeates the encounters by illustrating the social worker's efforts to get the clients to formulate their problems and solutions in preferred ways. I have also shown how this includes extensive, highly situated and flexible interactional work where the social worker's governing of the conversations must be balanced against the risk of being perceived as "governing too much". In relation to this, I have demonstrated the clients' interactional resistance work against interventions in their subjectivities as well as against stigmatising categorisations, and how they instead orient themselves towards normal subjectivities. Furthermore, I have drawn attention to the social workers' resistance work against the facilitator subjectivity assigned to them by the dialogue technology by showing how they sometimes resort to making judgements and handing down professional judgements "from

above". Both client and social worker subjectivities have been shown to be malleable, but there are limits to the malleability. Building, and keeping, a platform for continuing social work includes negotiating clients' and professionals' subjectivities respectively, and the subjectification of clients and social workers is something that is mutually accomplished. In this chapter, the social workers' governing of the conversations is performed in a very subtle way. In other words, power is expressed in a highly illusive form. As a consequence, the power expressed in social work dialogues is hard to detect and rarely becomes talkable. Hence, it avoids being subject to professional ethical discussions and democratic considerations. A contribution of this chapter is to make visible, and thus talkable, the subtle power that is expressed in social work dialogues in contemporary social work.

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6 Subjectification, Advice Giving and Resistance in Mental Health Home Visit Interactions

Kirsi Juhila and Cecilia Hansen Löfstrand

Introduction

The deinstitutionalisation of mental health care became a pervasive policy trend in the global North during the 20th century (Fakhoury & Priebe 2002; Mansell 2005). Welfare systems have thus seen changes in professional care delivery systems from care in large treatment institutions to community care and, more recently, to care in *home spaces* (Keet et al. 2019; Juhila et al. 2021). According to new inclusive ideals, care provision should be carried out in the form of *home visits* and be centred on the wishes of individual clients, thus flexibly adapting to individual clients' needs and wants as formulated by the clients themselves.

In this chapter, we start from the notion of home visits in the context of mental health care and support work as a novel technology for governing clients' conduct. Key to home visits are worker–client interactions and dialogue. In the context of mental health care home visits, clients who have experienced periods of living in large treatment institutions, homelessness and being spoken to and guided by professionals, are now faced with demands on them to live in their own apartment and to speak about and articulate their own needs and plans for the future. Different efforts during the last decades to make clients articulate their needs and wants as identified by themselves are an outcome of a general critique in Western welfare states against paternalism and hierarchies between welfare professionals and clients deemed to be old-fashioned and oppressive (Leifer 2001; Karlsen & Villadsen 2008; Hansen Löfstrand 2010; Padgett et al. 2016). Hence, in the context of mental health care and support work, home visits should *not* function by subjecting (dominating) clients but by working *through* clients as subjects by targeting their subjectivity and by *subjectification*, that is, through the clients' own processes of self-formation and self-constitution (e.g. Foucault 1982, 1996).

We explore how achieving subjectification is attempted in and by way of worker–client dialogues during home visits. In doing so, we draw on the notion of home visits or, more specifically, worker–client dialogues during home visits as a new governmental technology (Karlsen & Villadsen 2008: 348f.), whereby workers are to entice a 'new' kind of client subjectivity. The

worker–client dialogue during home visits is, thus, more than a technique; rather, it is a tool applied with the intention of enticing a change in subjectivity, imbuing it with a certain rationality. Ideally, by listening to and reflecting on the clients' articulation of problems and needs, the workers shall entice the client to 'assume certain self-truths' and identify 'appropriate action and conduct' (Karlsen & Villadsen 2008: 351), that is, realise the preferred course of action. The governance of clients is thus to be achieved through their self-governance. To produce changes in or achieve improvements of client subjectivities, workers depend on the client adapting and adjusting to this relatively new approach to professional care and support work, and their genuine participation in the process of self-formation. For these reasons, the worker–client dialogue during a home visit can be viewed as a 'key technology of government' (cf. Karlsen & Villadsen 2008: 359). Ideally, workers should no longer act '*for* or *upon*' clients (Karlsen & Villadsen 2008: 253; Lydahl & Löfstrand 2020); instead, clients are to reach their own conclusions about problems and needs and to act upon them themselves.

In this chapter, we analyse how achieving these ideals is attempted in home visits by analysing worker–client dialogues, with a particular focus on advice giving and client responses, including resistance. We ask what subject positions are encouraged by the advice giving and whether those subject positions are accepted or resisted. Ultimately, we ask to what degree clients are malleable with regard to workers' advice concerning changes in their everyday lives and future plans and what our findings imply as regards the concept of subjectification.

In the following, we start by discussing the concept of subjectification as entailing both advice-giving and responses, including resistance. We then account for our methods and materials before presenting our findings in terms of empirical types of advice-giving sequences and responses to advice giving, ranging from marked acceptance to overt resistance. In the concluding section, we discuss our findings in relation to the concept of subjectification and the issue of the extent to which clients as subjects are malleable.

Subjectification through advice giving and responses

Home visits as a technology for governing the conduct of others aim to shape (change) clients' subjectivities. As we shall see, the individual subject's speaking ability and subjectivity are constrained by the culturally available discourses and by the subject's location (Heller 1996: 91). The interactions between workers and clients analysed in this chapter take place at the margins of welfare services, that is, a last-resort support and care service, which is a kind of welfare service that is not universal or used by all citizens during their life course but is targeted at marginalised individuals. Clients as subjects are not totally free to speak. They are unfree in that 'their choice of tactics is inevitably mediated by an institutionally-determined linguistic tradition over which

they have little, if any, control' (Heller 1996: 91). However, as established by Foucault, 'discourses involved in subjectification are inevitably multiple and contradictory' (Heller 1996: 93). The multiplicity of discourses means that subjectification produces several possible subject positions.

The home visit is an arena for both workers and clients to act upon the self and subjectivity of clients. Arguably, in line with Foucault (1982: 781), home visits entail a form of power that 'applies itself to immediate everyday life' and 'which makes individuals subjects'. Certainly, clients are 'subject to someone else by control and dependence', but at the same time, they have an identity of their own, and are 'tied to' this identity by 'self-knowledge' (Foucault 1982: 781). Both these meanings of the term 'subject' are involved in the making—or moulding—of subjects. The concept of subjectification refers to the latter meaning of the term subject and can be defined as 'the constitution of the subject as an object for himself or herself' (Stewart & Roy 2014). Subjectification thus refers to 'the procedures by which the subject is led to observe herself, analyze herself, interpret herself, and recognize herself as a domain of possible knowledge' (Stewart & Roy 2014). In our study, subjectification procedures refer to the dialogues between workers and clients, specifically, advice-giving sequences that take place during home visits in the context of mental health care and support work. The concept enables analyses of processes of formation of the subject through the practices conducted by workers (advice giving) and clients (responses, including resistance).

As described, dialogue in interactions between workers and clients is a governmental technology producing subjectification. It encourages clients to talk, analyse and interpret themselves, and produce self-knowledge (Karlsen & Villadsen 2008; Stewart & Roy 2014). Taking advice giving and the responses to it as a special focus in analysing dialogues may seem contradictory, since in the scholarly literature, advice giving is often defined as a form of social control (Hall & Slembrouck 2014: 99) and, thus, closer to subjection than subjectification. However, we understand advice not as a 'command' that clients are forced to follow but as 'a non-coercive recommendation for some decision or course of action' (Kadushin & Kadushin 1997: 208), which leaves the recipients of the advice the choice to accept or reject the recommendation. In other words, advice giving invites clients to conduct their own conduct, to strengthen their self-governmentality.

Advice giving accomplished in institutional interactions in various health and social care settings has been widely analysed in conversation analytic (CA) and discourse analytic (DA) studies (e.g. Heritage & Sefi 1992; Silverman 1997; Vehviläinen 2001; Hepburn & Potter 2011; Limberg & Locher 2012; Hall & Slembrouck 2014). Although these studies do not connect advice giving to a Foucauldian approach to subjectification, we regard the findings of these studies as useful tools to analyse how subjectification is present and produced in dialogues between workers and clients in home visit interactions.

Previous CA and DA studies, using naturally occurring, real conversations as data, have demonstrated that advice giving is an ordinary feature in worker–client interactions in health and social care. In the seminal study focusing on interactions between health visitors and first-time mothers, Heritage and Sefi (1992: 368) define advice giving as sequences in which the worker 'describes, recommends or otherwise forwards a preferred course of future action'. Approaching advice giving as a sequence, involving topic initiation and closing, stepwise entry to advice and turns of talks from both workers and clients, underlines its dialogical nature. The dialogical nature of advice-giving sequences does not, however, mean equality between the parties. Sequences are always normative, since within them workers recommend certain decisions or courses of action for clients in the future, and asymmetrical, since recommendations are based on professional knowledge and institutional aims (Butler et al. 2010, ref. by Hall & Slembrouck 2014: 102). Silverman (1997: 41–45; see also Hall & Slembrouck 2014: 104) located two different communication formats in advice-giving sequences. In an information delivery format, advice is not personalised but is given in the form of general instructions concerning everyone. In an interview format, advice giving is personalised and based on identified or assumed problems or inadequacies in clients' lives.

In pointing out preferred future decisions and courses of action and, thus, bringing forward some deficiencies in the current situation, advice giving is a delicate matter and may be face-threatening for clients, especially in a personalised format. For this reason, advice is often given to clients in soft and indirect ways, and after joint and persuasive discussion and problem identification (cf. Suoninen & Jokinen 2005). Heritage and Sefi (1992: 391–341; see also Hall & Slembrouck 2014: 103–104) divided clients' responses to advice giving into marked acknowledgement, unmarked acknowledgement and assertions of knowledge and competence. The first response displays clear acceptance of advice (for example, 'yes, that is true'), whereas the last two implicate passive (for example, 'mm', 'yeah') or more active resistance (for example, 'I know', indicating that the advice is not news, or 'that is not relevant', indicating rejection of the advice) (on passive and active resistance in worker–client interactions, see also Juhila et al. 2014: 118–121).

To sum up, the sequences of advice giving, including both the ways in which workers display advice and how clients respond to them, can be regarded as procedures of subjectification and, thereby, also a technology of government. The sequences are examples of attempts at forming the subject conducted by both workers (others) and clients (selves) (cf. Stewart & Roy 2104).

Research setting, data and analysis

The context of this study is a local, non-governmental mental health organisation (NGO) founded in the 1990s to offer a community-based service as an alternative to hospital treatment. Their mission is that everyone has

the right to their own home, despite mental health difficulties. Nowadays, important values are good quality, professional, recovery-oriented mental health work practices. The organisation produces and provides supported housing, work activity and vocational rehabilitation, family work, self-help, leisure time and educational groups, voluntary work and recreational activities.

This study is located at the supported housing provided by the NGO and which is organised and financed according to contracts made with the local municipalities. The NGO's four supported housing units are intended for clients with various mental health difficulties, who may also have other challenges in life, such as substance abuse and health problems, loneliness and social isolation. The organisation's objective is for supported housing to strengthen clients' abilities to function, thus preventing the need for hospital stays, emergency services, substance abuse treatment or more intensive housing support services. The ultimate goal is to promote and support clients' recovery processes towards living as independently as possible. We understand supported housing as a project aimed at initiating clients' subjectification and strengthening their self-governance through practices conducted both by workers and clients.

The data drawn in this article were produced in two of the NGOs' supported housing units.[1] The first unit has 31 flats and 5 workers, and the second unit has 21 flats in the unit (and an additional 5 scattered flats) and 6 workers. The workers' educational backgrounds are in either nursing or social care. Clients have private flats, but units also have shared facilities for group activities and shared meals. Workers are present from 8 am to 6 pm. Home visits to clients' flats form a considerable part of their work, visiting each client's flat 1–3 times a week. The visits include various activities, such as motivational conversations, basic medical measures and guidance in cooking, cleaning, running errands and planning daily and weekly schedules (Juhila et al. 2020a).

The data consist of ten tape-recorded home visits and research field notes on the visits, and include two visits with four clients and one visit with two clients. Three of the clients are women and three are men. Their ages vary between 40 and 70 years old. The length of the visits varies between 15 and 77 minutes, and the average length is 40 minutes.

In the first phase of the analysis, we located such sequences in the data in which the worker 'describes, recommends or otherwise forwards a preferred course of future action' (Heritage & Sefi 1992: 368). In total, we found 44 advice-giving sequences during the 10 home visits. In the second phase, we coded thematically the kinds of actions the workers present as preferred in clients' lives, and found five groups of actions that concerned advice:

- participation in various activities;
- taking care of one's health (eating, weight, exercise, sleeping, smoking);
- taking care of one's personal hygiene;

- settling down and taking care of one's own flat, especially regarding its cleanliness; and
- taking care of/treating one's substance abuse problems.

In the third phase of the analysis, we examined more closely *how* interactions unfold in advice-giving sequences. We then paid special attention to the: (1) type of communication formats in use (see Silverman 1997: 41–45); (2) how clients are persuaded to follow preferred courses of action; and (3) how clients respond to advice giving, given the continuum from clear, marked acceptance to overt resistance (see Heritage & Sefi 1992: 391–341; Juhila et al. 2014b: 119–121). With these analytical tools, we aim to make visible how subjectification is initiated and attempts made at strengthening the self-governance of clients in the institutionally preferred manner achieved in home visit dialogues between workers and clients, and discuss how resonant and mouldable the clients are 'to governing practices and the aspirations of others' (Hansen Löfstrand & Jacobsson in this book).

In the following, we demonstrate our findings with extracts from dialogues that illustrate the variety of advice-giving sequences, especially from the point of view of clients' responses to the advice. We thus illustrate the procedures of subjectification as evident in our data. Arrows are used in the extracts to point out the indirect and direct advice given by the workers. The pauses in talk are marked in seconds and indicated by numbers in parentheses.

From marked acceptance to overt resistance of advice

Extract 1: Marked acceptance of advice giving

Our first extract illustrates the marked acceptance of advice giving (see Heritage & Sefi 1992: 391–395). The client in question is Nina, who is in her fifties and has a life history of having been a patient in a psychiatric hospital for many years. Since her time in hospital, she has been living in the supported housing unit for six years. Throughout this time, she has been staying in her mother's apartment from Wednesday to Sunday. So, she has two places to live.

In the following piece of conversation, the worker begins a new topic with a question concerning Nina's visit to a nutritionist:

1. W: ->Have you now received some good tips from that nutritionist?
2. NINA: Well, she urged, wrote me a note of what I should eat and drink and …
3. W: Yeah.
4. NINA: … buns should not be eaten well, mmm (4), did she say one per week or one per day. I do not remember what she [said], but …
5. W: Yeah, you have.
6. NINA: … vegetables should be eaten and skimmed milk and dark bread and (1) only a little butter.

7. W: -> Has it been easy for you to follow those instructions?
8. NINA: It's really easy to follow.
9. W: Well, good, yeah.
10. NINA: It was good that [my] sister called there when it [unclear, but Nina refers to that going to the nutritionist was her sister's initiative].
11. W: Yeah
12. NINA: It affects some people so much. And, well, taking medicines does affect so much [refers to the fact that taking medicines affects eating and weight].
13. W: -> Mmm. Do you feel like you've become sprier and more active?
14. NINA: Yes, I have. And I have a much lighter and slimmer feeling.
15. W: Yeah.
16. NINA: It helps, it helps right away.
17. W: Good, really good. Yeah. And if you yourself feel that this food is good for you.
18. NINA: [unclear] well, she wrote a note about what to avoid and what to eat.
19. W: Yeah, yes.
20. NINA: I can pretty well. It's just a normal meal per day, but she forbade eating potatoes that much, only a small amount of potatoes [is allowed].
21. W: Yeah.
22. NINA: As it [potato] has carbs. And then all those, well, I don't remember what else she forbade.
23. W: ->Probably sugar needs to be [reduced].
24. NINA: Yeah.
25. W: Yeah.
26. NINA: Yeah, those sweet juices can quickly become harmful.
27. W: -> Yeah, that is why it would be good to drink clean water so that you wouldn't get unnecessary calories.
28. NINA: Yes, it's not worth it. You quickly become sick if you drink sweet things and eat sugar. It weakens your condition if you drink such things all the time.

The worker's first three pieces of advice are formulated as questions: 'Have you now received some good tips from that nutritionist?' (turn 1), 'Has it been easy for you to follow those instructions?' (turn 7), and 'Do you feel like you've become sprier and more active?' (turn 13). They include normative messages that it would be good if Nina had got good tips, had followed them and is now sprier and more active. The worker's questions indicate that following the nutritionist's instructions in the future as well is a recommended course of action. Advice giving is done in a personalised interview format (Silverman 1997), implying that Nina has had problems with her eating habits. In spite of normativity, advice is given indirectly and delicately, as questions give room for Nina to formulate her answers quite freely.

In addition to the supported housing worker, the sequence includes another, although absent, professional—the nutritionist, whose speech Nina is reporting (on reported speech, see Holt & Clift 2010; Juhila et al. 2014a). The nutritionist has probably given the advice in an information delivery format (Silverman 1997), as Nina describes the notes she has got from the nutritionist and tries to remember all the received instructions on healthy eating (turns 2, 4, 6, 18, 20 and 22). By doing that, Nina displays marked acceptance of the nutritionist's advice; she does not criticise any of them as unnecessary or already known by her. The worker aligns with the received advice by encouraging and persuading Nina to repeat the instructions and to reflect on their positive effects on her well-being. The worker also displays her expertise with the advice, which helps Nina to remember the nutritionist's instructions: 'Probably sugar needs to be [reduced]' (line 23), and with the advice that adds knowledge to the instructions (turn 27). Overall, Nina's answers to the worker's indirect advice (aligning with the nutritionist's advice) signals marked acceptance as well as a shared view with both the nutritionist and the worker on what is understood as healthy eating, which is then (ideally) to be pursued in the future.

This advice-giving sequence between the worker and Nina illustrates how worker–client dialogues function as a governmental technology (Karlsen & Villadsen 2008), and how advice giving is the key subjectification procedure by which clients are led to observe and analyse themselves and their own conduct (cf. Stewart & Roy 2014). Nina's subjectivity as a person moving towards better eating habits is conducted by both experts and professionals (the nutritionist and the supported housing worker) with their advice and by Nina herself, who accepts the advice and the future course of action. Marked acceptance signals that Nina constructs herself as a person who needs advice and thus lacks knowledge in nutrition and eating habits. This subject position—a person needing advice—thus dominates the dialogue, and other possible positions, such as a person capable of individual choice making, are not talked into being.

Extract 2: Assertion of knowledge as response to advice giving

The second extract is an example of a sequence where the client responds to advice mainly by asserting their own knowledge (see Heritage & Sefi 1992: 402–404) as regards the culturally embedded norm of changing and washing the bedding regularly. Like the first extract, this piece of conversation is also from the home visit interaction between Nina and the supported housing worker.

1. W: -> When was the last time you have changed your sheets and your bedding? When have you washed [sheets and bedding]?
2. NINA: Yes, I have now washed sheets.
3. W: Yeah.

4. NINA: When you told me to do it, I surely washed them. Not for a very long time ago.
5. W: Well, I noticed that the pillowcase looks a bit sweaty, dirty.
6. NINA: Yeah [unclear].
7. W: -> You could put them into the wash. The pillowcase and the pillow itself could sometimes be washed.
8. NINA: Yeah.

As in the first extract, the worker begins the topic with a question and, thus, with the interview format (Silverman 1997: 41–45). 'When was the last time you have changed your sheets and your bedding? When have you washed [sheets and bedding]?'. Although put in the form of a question, the opening turn includes a suspicion that Nina may not have been changing and washing the bedding often enough. It also includes an embedded norm of a proper frequency of changing and washing. Nina does not seem to treat the question as a threat to her face and as a problematic intrusion to her privacy, as she simply answers that she has been washing the sheets (turn 2).

The word 'now' in Nina's answer (turn 2) indicates that this is not the first time the worker and Nina have talked about this issue. This interpretation becomes even more likely as Nina assures the worker in her next turn: 'When you told me to do it, I surely washed them' (turn 4). This turn also includes the assertion of knowledge. Nina makes it clear that based on the earlier advice by the worker, she already knows that her sheets should be washed at certain intervals, so there is no need to repeat the advice. This response has a flavour of rejecting the advice.

However, the worker continues suspecting that there is still something to be done about the bedding, and she grounds this suspicion with her observation of a 'sweaty and dirty pillowcase' (see Juhila et al. 2022). Nina gives a minimal response ('yeah') to this comment, which is followed by the worker's direct advice, which again includes a normative recommendation: 'You could put them into the wash. The pillowcase and the pillow itself could sometimes be washed' (turn 7). Nina's response is again minimal ('yeah'), which can be interpreted as an unmarked acknowledgement and, hence, passive resistance towards the advice (see Heritage & Sefi 1992: 395–402; Silverman 1997: 140–145; Juhila et al. 2014b: 120–121).

In terms of subjectification and similar to the first extract, this extract includes both the conduct of the worker on Nina's conduct and Nina's conduct on her own conduct. In principle, Nina seems to accept the normative, preferred course of action promoted by the worker, that the sheets and bedding should be changed and washed regularly. However, she implies that she is already knowledgeable about this cleanliness norm and needs no further instructions. The worker doubts this and bases this doubt on her observation. Nina's passive resistance in the sequence can be interpreted as a sign that she is not very malleable when it comes to this hygiene matter. Regarding the subject positions, the worker produces Nina as a person needing

continuous guidance. However, Nina rejects this position and presents herself as a person who has already learnt the lesson.

Extract 3: *Assertion of competence in response to advice giving*

Our third extract, illustrating assertion of competence (Heritage & Sefi 1992: 402–409) in response to advice giving, is from the home visit interaction between the supported housing worker and Julia. Julia is in her sixties and has suffered from depression and substance abuse problems. She has been living in the supported housing unit for approximately five years. Before this extract, the worker and Julia had been discussing Julia's night sleeps generally, her use of sleeping pills, and how she fell asleep last night after watching TV.

1. JULIA: I was still awake at 2 [am]; I remember that. I went to the bathroom and looked at the clock; it was around two.
2. W: Yeah. So, it then took an hour to fall asleep.
3. JULIA: Mm.
4. W: Yeah.
5. JULIA: It's a short time as, for example, one night last week, I only fell asleep at five in the morning.
6. W: -> Yeah. It tightens nerves, spinning in bed. I told you about reading books, too. It could be one (1) alternative to (1) calming down to sleep. Have you thought about it? (2) That might. You have been active in reading books.
7. JULIA: Mm, well, I can't concentrate on books anymore, that (1). Sleep must come without anything, and it has come after all.
8. W: Well, okay. An hour is however…
9. JULIA: Mm.
10. W: … quite a long time to fall asleep, but the situation is after all really good [now] compared to several hours…
11. JULIA: Yes
12. W: … rotating in bed.
13. JULIA: Yes.
14. W: Well, then you had that second activity, crossword puzzles. Have you [done them]?
15. JULIA: No, I haven't bought a lattice magazine yet. I didn't even remember [it] when I went to the store [laughing].
16. W: -> Well, I thought that it wouldn't be a big investment if you try, as you are kind of verbally talented. That you would try. Would it be like, if it takes that hour in trying to solve [crossword puzzles]?
17. JULIA: Mm (3) mm, I should perhaps consider that.
18. W: Yeah, you won't lose anything in it if you try it.

In the first five turns, Julia and the worker talk about Julia's last night. Julia describes how she was still awake at 2 am. The worker calculates that it

then took Julia 'an hour to fall asleep' (turn 2). When Julia adds that it took even longer to fall asleep the previous week (turn 5), the worker assesses this state of affairs as a problem that 'tightens nerves' and, thus, needs solving (turn 6). She advises, referring to an earlier discussion with Julia, that reading books 'could be one (1) alternative to (1) calming down to sleep'. However, Julia does not answer the worker's question directly as to whether she thought that might be a possible solution. So, the worker adds another argument; she now refers to her knowledge about Julia's past reading hobby. By these arguments, the worker persuades Julia to respond positively to her advice.

Julia starts her response to the advice with minimal and hesitant tokens ('mm, well'), indicating passive resistance, and continues with a disagreeing statement: 'I can't concentrate on books anymore, that (1). Sleep must come without anything, and it has come after all' (turn 7). This response displays an assertion of competence: Julia knows better and is more competent than the worker to draw the conclusion that books do not help her (anymore) to fall asleep. The worker treats this response as unpreferred and once more makes the point that even an hour is 'quite a long time to fall asleep', although not as bad as several hours (turns 8 and 10). Julia does not actively resist this interpretation but reacts twice to it with minimal 'yes' responses (turns 11 and 13).

The worker does not give up on her idea that some activity may help with falling asleep. She gives another indirect advice by suggesting that crossword puzzles may also help and asks whether Julia has done them (turn 14). Julia's answer is negative, as she explains with a laughing voice that she did not remember to buy them from the store (turn 15). This response implies that the worker has made this suggestion earlier as well. As in the previous advice giving concerning the book reading, the worker still tries to persuade Julia to pursue this activity by referring to its easiness (not 'a big investment') and to Julia's verbal talent. This time, after persuasion, Julia is a bit more positive about the advice: 'I should perhaps consider that' (turn 17). The worker confirms Julia's slightly positive reaction towards this activity (turn 18).

In this extract, subjectification is partly present in a similar way as in the two previous examples. The worker reaches out to conduct Julia's sleeping habits and recommends different activities that may help her to fall asleep. Julia shares with the worker the aim of the future course of action, that is, better night sleeps. However, she does not accept the worker's advice on how to reach that aim. She knows better than the worker how to conduct her own conduct. The activities suggested by the worker do not necessarily help her to fall asleep quicker. The subject positions constructed for Julia are thus twofold: on the one hand, she is jointly (by both the worker and the client herself) produced as a person needing help, and on the other hand, Julia presents herself as a self-knowledgeable, competent person who knows what helps and what does not help her. The latter position implies that the worker's preferred course of action for Julia does not seem to be realised.

Extracts 4 and 5: Overt resistance as response to advice giving

Our last two extracts are examples of the clients' overt resistance towards the workers' advice. They are taken from both Julia's and Nina's home visits. The first comes from a discussion between Julia and the supported housing worker concerning the upcoming weekend, which will be warm and sunny:

1. W: -> Have you any plans for this coming weekend?
2. JULIA: What will I have, a similar staying and wondering [laughs] alone at home as any other day of the week.
3. W: -> (2) Well, it will be pretty nice weather. So, it could be imagined that you would go out walking a little. Walk around the lake (3). It could also make you a little [unfinished sentence] (1). You would start it again. You have anyway been quite active in exercise.
4. JULIA: Well, I've not been that active. I've always been a pretty passive mover.
5. W: I just remember that you had that.
6. JULIA: Even then, when I was healthy, I didn't move much.
7. W: But you were in the women's sports group.
8. JULIA: I was, but it was a forced bun [unpleasant activity] for me, so luckily I managed to quit it.

The worker uses the interview format (Silverman 1997: 41–45) when she asks Julia about her plans for the coming weekend (turn 1). The question includes an indirect recommendation that having some plans would be good. Julia's answer does not fulfil the expectation of having special plans: 'What will I have, a similar staying and wondering [laughs] alone at home as any other day of the week' (turn 2). The worker treats this response as unpreferred, since after a pause she starts with 'well' (signalling passive resistance) and continues with a persuasive argument, underlining first the forthcoming 'pretty nice weather', and then advising Julia that she could 'walk around the lake' on the weekend (turn 3). After that she strengthens the persuasion by appealing to Julia's personal exercising history, which she could now reactivate (turn 3).

The worker's persuasion is not successful, since Julia disagrees with the interpretation of having been earlier actively engaged in exercise by presenting a totally opposite self-construction: 'I've always been a pretty passive mover' (turn 4). However, the worker continues with her persuasion by bringing forward that she remembers this differently (turns 5 and 7). However, although Julia admits that she had been 'in the women's sports group', she describes it as an unpleasant activity that she 'luckily' quit (turn 8).

The following advice-giving sequence with Nina's overt resistance also proceeds in the interview format and begins with the worker's question on Nina's rather recent two-place living arrangement:

1. W: Has this been suitable for you that you spend part of the week there with mom and part here?

2. NINA: Yeah, it's a real gift of life, so it can't be changed anymore for anything else that …
3. W: Yeah
4. NINA: [unclear]
5. W: Yeah.
6. NINA: [unclear] terrible
7. W: Yes, does it scare you that …
8. NINA: [unclear] a mere thought, the thought of it.
9. W: Yes. You are scared by the idea of having to be here every day, right?
10. NINA: Scared, scared terribly, even by the mere thought.
11. W: Yeah.
12. NINA: Yes, I like living here, but there is anyway something to learn [unclear].
13. W: Yeah, well it's a little different.
14. NINA: [unclear]
15. W: -> Well, yes, it is. I'm sure you would get used to being here all the time, but well.
16. NINA: No, no. You see my health wouldn't tolerate that.
17. W: Well, then, that's how you feel.
18. NINA: My thoughts will go crazy, I tell people all kinds of things, shameful things, that … No, no, no. So, it will never be [full time], it will never succeed.
19. W -> Yeah, of course you don't need to think that yet.
20. NINA: No, no, no, no, no.

The worker's question is neutral in the sense that it just invites Nina to reflect on whether it is suitable for her to spend part of the week at her mother's home and the other part at the supported housing unit. Nina's response is very clear; she regards the arrangement as 'a real gift' that should not be changed (turn 2). The worker's minimal responses ('yeah'; turns 3, 5 and 11) imply passive resistance, thus treating Nina's answer as possibly unpreferred. Although there are some unclear turns, Nina's voice sounds nervous with one audible word, namely 'terrible' (turn 6). The worker's next turn confirms the emotional load of the topic when she asks whether a possible change in the arrangement would scare Nina (turn 7). Nina accepts this interpretation with strong tones and words; 'even the mere thought' of change scares her (turns 8 and 10).

Despite strongly resisting the idea of changing the current living arrangement, Nina then displays that she likes living in the supported housing unit, but staying there all the time requires learning (turn 12). The worker immediately catches the possibility of learning and gives indirect and delicate advice: 'I'm sure you would get used to being here all the time' (turn 15). Nina's response is overtly resistant ('no, no') with the argument that her 'health wouldn't tolerate that' (turn 16). She continues her strong resistance

by describing her 'crazy' behaviour in an imagined situation after a change in her living arrangements. She ends the turn with an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz 1986), 'it will never succeed' (turn 18), thus also rejecting the possibility of learning. The worker accepts this interpretation at this moment but leaves the future open with the statement that Nina does not have to think about a change in her living arrangements 'yet' (turn 19), implying that at some point in time Nina will have to think about changing her living arrangements. This could be interpreted as an example of a subtle, yet strong intervention, attempting to destabilise 'the self-identity and subjectivity' of Nina to prepare her mentally for changes to come in the future (Sunnerfjell & Jacobsson 2018: 306). However, Nina ends the sequence with a determined rejection of any such change (turn 20).

In terms of subjectification, these last two sequences with overt resistance towards the workers' advice differ from the previous three in the sense that the clients do not share the workers' preferred courses of action. Julia resists the ideas of going for a walk over the upcoming weekend and the image of herself as an active and sporty subject. Nina, for her part, does not accept the delicate advice on living only in the supported housing unit in the future. Instead, she defines herself as a subject, who enjoys the current arrangement and whose health would not tolerate such a change in the future either. The workers use persuasion to conduct the conduct of Julia and Nina. For Julia, this is persuading her towards living more physically and actively, and for Nina, towards a more independent housing arrangement, meaning ending or at least reducing living at her mother's home. Julia and Nina are, however, not malleable to this kind of conduct to change their conduct. Instead, they conduct their own conduct in their own preferred ways. The subject positions produced in these dialogues are not unanimous at all. The workers produce Nina and Julia as persons needing advice and changes in their everyday lives. Nina and Julia, however, do not agree with these interpretations; instead, they present themselves as persons satisfied with their current living arrangements.

Conclusion and discussion

In this study, we have combined Foucauldian theory on subjectification procedures and processes and the interactional analysis of advice giving developed in discursive and CA studies. As far as we know, such a combination has not been used in existing research. We argue that our study, focusing on mental health home visit dialogues between workers and clients, demonstrates how subjectification processes can be made visible by concentrating on naturally occurring talk in interactions, which in this case is on advice-giving sequences.

Advice giving as suggestions about preferred courses of future action can be seen as subtle yet strong interventions in the subjectivity of clients. Given that advice always includes recommendations for future decisions

and actions, advice giving has a normative tone and, thus, sheds light on societal and cultural norms about how to live an everyday life. In our extracts, the workers advised the clients to eat healthier, wash the bedding more often, achieve better night sleeps, increase exercise and reduce living in the mother's home. These are just examples of the wide variety of recommendations present in home visit dialogues. However, what is common to all recommendations embedded in the workers' advice is that they aim to conduct the conduct of the clients towards better self-governance in the future. Our analysis demonstrated that the clients occasionally accepted the advice and displayed agreement with the suggested way to strengthen their self-governance. However, the analysis also demonstrated the clients' resistance to advice. The weakest way to resist advice was by asserting their own knowledge, something which implies signalling agreement with the content of a recommendation and a norm, but brings forward that the client is already aware of and acting according to the advice. Assertion of self-knowledge and competence was a resistant response that agreed with the future course of action recommended in the workers' advice, but which disagreed with how to reach the shared aim. In overt resistance, the clients questioned the relevance of the whole recommendation.

We argue that clients as subjects in home visits and by the procedures involved in worker–client dialogues (advice giving and responses, including resistance) are enticed to observe themselves and their own habits, and to analyse and interpret their own actions, that is, recognise themselves as objects of self-knowledge and amendments. The governance of clients is carried out through subjectification, that is, through clients' self-governance. By way of advice giving, the workers encourage clients or make recommendations on how to deal with their everyday lives and courses of future actions. Considering that subjectification refers to 'the procedures by which the subject is led to observe herself, analyze herself, interpret herself, and recognize herself as a domain of possible knowledge' (Stewart & Roy 2014), our conclusion is that workers' 'leading' does not always result in clients' 'recognising' advice or preferred future actions as valid or true. The clients are not totally malleable to subjectification, but they occasionally produce other subject positions and ways of self-governance than were suggested in the advice.

In this study, we have analysed situational, here and now occurring dialogues and advice-giving sequences. We thus cannot claim to know whether the clients' acceptance or resistance of the conduct or their conduct go beyond these home visit interactions or are permanent ways of responding to advice. Neither do we know whether the clients internalise the suggested advice or follow it in their future decisions or actions. However, our findings do make visible how cultural norms on what is regarded as appropriate self-governed and self-responsible adulthood are present in the dialogues. Furthermore, the aim of the supported housing, which is to provide a halfway place for mental health rehabilitees to achieve an independent and 'adult way' of life as much as possible, is also embedded in the dialogues. The

findings also show resistance towards tight cultural norms on the proper and healthy ways of living as adults, as the clients indirectly criticised, for example, the expectation of exercising regularly and of independence in relation to parents. In a way, clients thus question the norms of normality by allowing themselves to openly break some of the norms of adulthood.

Arguably, our chapter has illustrated that both advice giving and the responses to it, including resistance, are integral to the subjectification process when clients come to observe themselves as domains of knowledge and as objects of their own amendments. However, the institutionally preferred self-governance and the subjectification of the mental health care client may not be ideally achieved. As illustrated, however, self-knowledgeable subjects are certainly reached in the process. This, in turn, leads us to argue that subjectification as a concept should perhaps not be looked at as synonymous with a *change* in subjectivities or adjustments in line with preferred courses of action. Rather, we should understand subjectification as the process of creating various situational subject positions. Subjectification can, in fact, be achieved without it resulting in changes in identity and subjectivity. Our chapter further illustrates that subjectification cannot be just assumed theoretically; it needs to be studied empirically in detail and as a process developing over time and unfolding in a variety of ways.

Note

1 The data have been produced within the research project 'Geographies of Home-based Service Interactions at the Margins of Welfare in Finland and Sweden' (2017–2022, Academy of Finland). The whole data corpus of the project includes home visits conducted in seven supported housing services (five in Finland and two in Sweden). We have chosen this NGO and its home visit interactions for the purposes of this chapter analysis, since clients living in its two units are defined as being halfway towards independent living and, thus, need strengthening in self-governance.

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7 Transforming Industrial Subjectivity?

Scenes from a Youth Activation Centre

Jon Sunnerfjell

Introduction

Since Bill Clinton famously announced his intention to 'end welfare as we know it' during his 1992 presidential campaign, a 'new wisdom' (Gallie 2004: 198) of abandoning welfare systems encouraging passive dependence on solidarity, as it were, has reverberated on both sides of the Atlantic. What has been labelled 'the active turn of social and labour market policy' here emphasises the importance of measures bringing people outside of the labour force into jobs by increasing their employability and ensuring that individuals receive the right motivation and incentives to seek employment (OECD 2015). Therefore, European activation policies are characterised by a strong supply-side policy focus, sharing the workfare rationales propagated in the US during the 1990s and their distinct make-work-pay logic (European Commission 2016).

Notably, this shift from 'secular' to 'moral' perspectives, if you will, on social welfare (Østergaard Møller & Stone 2013) has coincided with vast structural transformations of Western labour markets whereby the industrial sector has been increasingly outmanoeuvred by an ever-expanding text-and-talk *ditto*. Here, activation policies aim at helping individuals to adapt formal and psychological competences and qualities, such as sociability and communicative skills, to a knowledge economy (Crespo Suárez & Serrano Pascual 2004: 7).

Drawing on ethnographic observations inside a youth activation centre located in a Swedish former industrial community, the chapter illustrates attempts at transforming a so-called industrial mentality, marked by a particular self-image and the expectation among young adults of bypassing high school and moving straight into jobs in the industrial sector. In this way, it depicts attempts at *transforming subjectivity* while noting resistance to such schemes, showing differences in individual susceptibility to processes of governmental self-formation (Dean 1995).

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide a brief background of the active society orientation and its manifestation in Sweden. I then present governmentality as a thinking tool for making sense of activation schemes.

Then, a brief note on methodology is presented. At this point, I introduce Milltown[1] as a distinct industrial community before describing scenes from the empirical material. While recognising processes of human malleability, I end the chapter by highlighting the complexities of transforming subjectivity, reiterating the notion that in practice, government is always subject to rupture and resistance.

The enabling state: A turn towards the local

In the *Europe 2020* strategy, the notion of active inclusion has always been central (European Commission 2008). In line with Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) observation, the strategy reflects a process by which social inequality has successively been reconceptualised in terms of individual exclusion, hence shifting conflicts at a structural level to the level of the individual (Crespo Suárez & Serrano Pascual 2004). Consequently, responsibility has increasingly been dispersed from welfare states down to the micro level (cf. Sunnerfjell 2020), a process sometimes described as 'government at a distance' (e.g. Rose 1999). Here, welfare organisations increasingly motivate individuals to 'work on themselves' to become included and productive citizens, *enabling*, as it were, long-term unemployed persons, the young, the elderly, single parents, refugees, the sick, the inexperienced and disabled people to participate in the labour market (Heidenreich & Rice 2016: 3). This essential reorganisation of the welfare system thus applies to all parts of the welfare states' services and benefits; no social groups are exempted from the requirements to be active citizens responsible for their own development. In Sweden, the state-owned company *Samhall* is an illustrative example, enabling people with functional variations by 'putting them to productive use' in society (Holmqvist et al. 2013: 194).

Importantly, as the quest for active inclusion has required measures to become more personalised, scholars have depicted a turn towards 'the local', highlighting the conversion of previously separate policy fields, such as social and employment policies, at the municipal level (Heidenreich & Rice 2016). In Sweden, this is seen in welfare clients being increasingly subjected to municipal activation initiatives instead of being assisted by the Public Employment Service (PES). Here, the latter is increasingly occupied with individuals considered relatively close to gaining employment, who are offered 'lightweight' services, such as job coaching and courses on CV preparation. In contrast, municipal activation initiatives are often geared towards individuals deemed to be further from the labour market, often because of some social issue. However, paradoxically, research shows that unemployment as such is, in fact, the most common reason for individuals to apply to municipal social services for financial aid (Jacobson-Libietis 2017: 49). This may be understood in light of the fact that between 2006 and 2014, the centre-right government heeded neoliberal calls for deregulation, making

it more expensive to join unemployment funds and thereby increasing the number of people applying for economic benefits via their municipalities.

Since 2013, municipalities are allowed to require some form of participation in rehabilitative or competence-enhancing activities in return for economic benefits.[2] Here, recent changes in Swedish labour policy have placed further demands on municipalities to extend their local activation measures. In 2019, as a result of a series of governmental decisions, the PES started to close down approximately half of its local offices, which has mainly affected municipalities already troubled by high rates of unemployment. Milltown is but one example.

This chapter is concerned with a particular instrument for encouraging active inclusion at the local level, namely the *European Social Fund* (ESF). Established in 1957, following calls to reduce unemployment and social exclusion through activation projects for various target groups, the ESF encourages municipalities to submit applications. In fact, the ESF has proven to be one of the European Union's most important financial instruments to support employment throughout the Member States, boosting 'the adaptability of workers with new skills' in attempts to enhance 'social inclusion' (ESF, n.d.). Thus, in line with Panican and Ulmestig's (2019) recent overview of municipal activation strategies in Sweden, these initiatives are aimed at individual interventions with little concern for the structural conflicts often at play in environments with high rates of unemployment.

Governmentality and its discontents: The study's theoretical beacon

As we know, Foucault's definitions – for there were many – of the notion of governmentality are somewhat ambiguous. If that were not enough, in his writings, the concept is sometimes used interchangeably with those of biopolitics and biopower, making it even harder to distinguish governmentality as a theoretically sound concept. In this study, I draw on Foucault's notion of governmentality as the 'encounter between technologies of domination of others and those of the self' (Foucault & Rabinow 1997: 225). This definition directs our attention towards the specific practices involved in attempts to change individuals' relationships with the self as well as their self-government (Dean 1995).

Moreover, in the present study, the notion of biomedicalisation refers to governmental as well as individual aspirations to locate unwanted or deviant behaviours to the brain and its neurochemical transmitter systems. That is, whereas medicalisation refers to the process by which human ailments and problems are defined and treated as medical issues, biomedicalisation marks the shift whereby 'new individual and collective techno-scientific identities' are created (Clarke et al. 2003: 163), encouraging individuals to re-evaluate ambiguities and hardships in life, such as unemployment, in

terms of neurobiological malfunctions (Rose 2003). As such, biomedicalisation may be understood in terms of a *para*-governmentality encouraging individuals to subscribe to neurobiological identities as an ethical mode of self-formation (Dean 1995; Sunnerfjell & Jacobsson 2018).

In this way, the notion of governmentality in this research is an analytical tool for the encounter between welfare services and clients, forming the 'missing link', so to speak, between broader political rationales and the 'subjectivity work' (Garsten & Jacobsson 2013: 838) performed by individuals.

Whereas the vast body of literature on governmentality concerns either analysis or discourse, the present chapter explores the ways in which individuals respond to interventions aimed at transforming subjectivity (cf. Sunnerfjell & Jacobsson 2018). In line with Boulus-Rødje (2019) and Brady (2011, 2014), it highlights the complexity of applying Foucault's apparatus to the lived reality of individuals, reiterating the notion that governmentality is not stable top-down work but a process imbued with tensions and cracks (Juhila et al. 2017), thus revealing the nuances of governmental subject formation.

Study design

As part of a larger ethnographic research project on how a distinctly industrial community managed the challenge of adapting to a post-industrial society, since the spring of 2018, I have made repeated visits to the community of Milltown, where a youth activation centre has been established to mitigate passivity and social exclusion. By observing everyday life inside the centre, I have been interested in the ways in which supranational policy recommendations of active inclusion play out in action. Here, I have sought specific practices that turn the 'presumed passive and more or less excluded unemployed person into an energetic, able and included citizen' (Holmqvist 2009: 2). This means that I have focussed on social interactions between coaches and participants, paying particular attention to the joint action of defining the situation (Blumer 1954; Goffman 1982) – that is, 'the mutual exchange of cues, gestures, signs, and symbols' (Perinbanayagam 1974: 529) related to the discourse on activation. In this way, I intended to understand how the community's local rationality, or what I label 'sociologic', affects the local translation of activation policies.

While in the field, I usually resided in the community for a week at a time, although the longest stays exceeded two months. Specifically, the analysis draws on 18 observations conducted in or in the proximity of the community's youth activation centre, 10 interviews with managers, coaches and participants, as well as numerous ethnographical conversations with coaches, participants and locals in the community, referring to a kind of 'go-along'-talks more formal than a chat although less formal than an interview (Kusenbach 2003: 480).

Milltown and its youth activation centre

Towards the end of the 19th century, Milltown, located in the southeast of Sweden, went from being a poor agricultural community on the nation's periphery to a thriving society built around its emerging pottery industry. During the first half of the 20th century, the same engineers who were recruited to the factories also laid the foundations of the emerging society by designing modern sewerage systems, supplying the community with electricity, and building roads. Successively, the industry provided Milltown's growing population with housing and basic forms of health care. In this way, it came as no surprise when I discovered literature portraying Milltown as an illustrative example of the Swedish 'peoples' home', referring to a metaphor used in early social democratic rhetoric to depict Sweden's emerging welfare state.

By the 1970s, a paper mill was also established on the outskirts of the community, further strengthening Milltown as a distinct industrial community driving Sweden's success in exporting. However, similar to other industrial communities throughout the Western welfare states, in recent decades Milltown has witnessed widespread redundancies owing to technological innovations and relocation of production to low-wage countries. As a result, and with a lack of an academic tradition, for the past decade, Milltown has struggled with high rates of unemployment, a situation that the municipal council has described as 'very depressing' in regional news media.

By 2013, the municipality had decided to address Milltown's problems with unemployment by organising a youth activation centre in the community. Targeting young adults who were neither studying nor working, the municipality's website reported that the plan was to 'gather several actors under one roof to facilitate getting the unemployed started on meaningful activities'. More specific objectives included reducing the number of young people abandoning their studies and increasing the employability and entrepreneurial spirit of the participants.

The person managing the centre is Monica, a woman in her fifties, who is responsible for the municipality's activation responsibility. This means that she is responsible for monitoring whether young people under 20 in the municipality are active in upper secondary school. According to chapter 29, section 9 of the Swedish Education Act, this responsibility applies to all Swedish municipalities, which under the active inclusion strategy are supposed to offer all homebound appropriate individual measures to avoid passivity. This responsibility applies all year round and must not be limited to school terms or the like. Therefore, in Milltown, the municipality's activation responsibility is very much entwined with the community's activation centre.

To finance the centre, Milltown heeded the ESF, which facilitated measures such as making four community youth recreation leaders into coaches at the centre, thus bringing local knowledge of Milltown's young adults. As

Table 7.1 Summary of Milltown's two ESF-funded activation projects conducted in the youth activation centre

Project	Time frame	Target group	Main objectives
1	Autumn 2016– Spring 2018	Young adults aged 15–24 who are not in education, employment or training. In a supplementary application to the ESF, Milltown extended the target group to young adults aged 16–29.	To increase employment and participation in education.
2	Spring 2018– Autumn 2021	Young adults aged 16–29 with neuropsychiatric diagnoses, as well as potential employers who may want to employ the target group.	To increase social inclusion by motivating participants to take up studies, find employment or internships, as well as increase potential employers' knowledge of the target group.

of 2021, two ESF-funded projects have been based in the centre, hereinafter referred to simply as *Projects 1* and *2*. As we shall see, although the everyday practices did not differ greatly, the projects had different target groups (see Table 7.1) which influenced the coaches' approaches to the participants.

In fact, in the years following the establishment of the centre, Milltown's youth unemployment decreased from approximately 30 to 14 percent. Although this still exceeded the national average of 12 percent, the decrease nevertheless marked a considerable improvement. However, the decrease should also be understood in light of a general upswing of Sweden's economic situation.

Fostering the active self: Project 1

When I first visited Milltown's youth activation centre in 2018, I was struck by the friendly atmosphere prevailing between coaches and participants. Much warmth and laughter characterised the everyday life of activating the community's homebound, and as a visitor, I felt immediately welcome. In contrast to comparable environments such as the Public Employment Agency or so-called job centres, even the centre's main locale seemed welcoming:

The main room is large with a chequered floor in black and white. A group of sofas and some tables are placed in the centre. Along the windows facing the schoolyard, there are groups of tables and chairs lined

up where participants are able to hang out and get help with everything from homework, filling in various forms or applications, and applying for jobs. On the left wall, just inside the entrance door, the participants at the centre have put together a colourful collage of paintings. Adorned with glitter and illustrations, in bright colours, they contain self-empowering messages, stating things such as 'Love yourself', 'You're the best!' and 'You look great today!'

(Field notes)

The messages on the wall thus reminded participants not to self-denigrate. At the same time, precisely because they promoted self-empowerment, they attributed difficulties in life, such as prolonged periods of passivity, to the self. That is, apart from one message stating, simply, 'Fuck drugs!' none of the messages directed any frustration at external circumstances affecting the participants' situation, such as the constant restructuring of the local industries. In this way, they implicitly reflect a so-called neoliberal discourse encouraging individuals to scrutinise the self as part of resolving ambiguities in life (cf. Crespo Suárez & Serrano Pascual 2004; Mikelatou & Arvanitis 2017). Here, the coaches in Milltown's activation centre functioned as 'experts of subjectivity' (Rose 1999), promoting 'work on the self' by means of methods such as *Motivational Interviewing* (MI) rendering the participants responsible for their own improvement.

Widening participants' horizons: Mobility as a moral dimension of activation

In Milltown's activation centre, the view that the municipality's problems with unemployment were related to a persistent 'industrial mentality' was largely reproduced by both coaches and participants. As in other studies of young adults transitioning from school to work in blue-collar communities (e.g. Everhart 1983; Weis 1990; Willis 1993), this referred to the elevation of manual work among Milltown's young adults, as well as their lack of interest in school achievements.

After spending some time in the centre, I also noticed that immobility appeared to be yet another aspect linked to the industrial mentality as a somewhat stagnant subject position:

Milltown—I would describe it as a typical industrial community. We're not that famous for sending our children to universities, and stuff like that.

(Coach Anna)

Young people here, they're really homebound, they don't go anywhere! They want to live here, go to school here, and then preferably work here.

(Coach Stina)

Before, [primary] schools here used to organise visits to places outside the municipality. So even though parents wouldn't take their kids to see something else, young people still got to see places other than their home turf.

(Project leader Anette)

An illustrative example of being homebound in this way is expressed by Liam:

JON: Have you lived in Milltown all your life?
LIAM: Yep! I have lived in two places here in Milltown.
JON: What's it like, living here?
LIAM: Oh, it's great.
JON: Can you tell me something about what it is that you like about Milltown?
LIAM: Well, I guess it's a sense of safety. To know who most people are. You never feel alone here. You always meet someone you know when you walk through the village. I think that's just fantastic.

(Interview with Liam, 17 years old)

In this way, one aspect of the presumed industrial mentality may be understood in terms of belonging to an 'imagined community of "people like me"' (Lamont 2000: 3). In this way, through notions of community, safety and inter-relationships, young Milltowners like Liam resisted the reconceptualisation of mobility as 'empowerment, self-actualisation, and as a learning opportunity', described by Garsten (2008: 4) as integral to late capitalism (see also Farrugia 2016; Uddbäck 2021). Concurrent with the active society orientation, immobility thus entails a moral dimension in that the unemployed are expected to gravitate towards places where job prospects are brighter (cf. Article 45 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). Lingering in a rural post-industrial community like Milltown thus works against the 'cosmopolitan ethos' described by Rozpedowski (2010).

Consequently, in Milltown's activation centre, participants' ties with the community had to be loosened as they were a form of mental confinement hindering development. This was done by widening their horizons of expectation and encouraging them to reflect on the future and what they *really* wanted to achieve in life (cf. Benson 2008). Gadamer (2004: 301) writes:

The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth. […] 'to have a horizon' means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it.

An example of such widening of horizons was to remind participants who aspired to work manually in the future (as for example welders, stonemasons

or electricians) of the importance of education because the industrial sector is more knowledge-intensive than in the past.[3] Interestingly, a surprising number of participants who favoured non-industrial jobs mentioned 'youth recreation leader' as a possible future occupation. This, I suggest, is testament to the coaches' impact on the participants. Thus, Lasse, who as a result of enrolment in the centre had now chosen to return to high school, chose youth recreation leader as his specialisation:

> JON: How come, do you think?
> LASSE: I think it has a lot to do with Denny [a popular leader at the centre, nice guy]. That he, like, they [Denny and the coaches at the centre] were my youth recreation leaders when I was young, and I looked up to them a lot. And I have always felt that I am rather social, and that it was a youth recreation leader I wanted to become.
>
> (Interview with Lasse, former participant)

The quote testifies to the complexity of Lasse's subject formation. On the one hand, he reflects that his desire to become a youth recreation leader may be influenced by Denny and the coaches at Milltown's activation centre, while on the other hand, he reports having 'always' nurtured this desire. Whether the latter assertion is true is, of course, impossible to ascertain. However, the fact that the vast majority of centre enrollees who were not interested in manual work mentioned youth recreation leader as a possible future occupation seems to reflect their malleability, albeit through processes of identification rather than intentional fostering of subjectivity.

Disciplining the body: Bioethical dimensions of activation

In contrast to the industrial mentality as a particular subject position valorising community, safety, loyalty and manual labour are its entrepreneurial counterparts. In line with literature on entrepreneurial learning (Westlund & Westlund 2007), the 'enterprising self' (Lemke 2001) here appears as the subject of neoliberal governmentality, referring less to the actual conduct of business and more to personalities who are active and self-managerial, proclaiming themselves citizens of the world rather than of the state or community (cf. Durante 2014). As such, the entrepreneur often manifests as a reasonable target image, or *totem*, in the frequently ambiguous activation discourse (cf. Dahlstedt & Fejes 2019). In Milltown, this was reflected in the talk of the municipality's business manager, who has the overall responsibility for developing and supporting existing companies and commercial entities in the municipality:

> There is no such tradition of entrepreneurship here. Instead, you inherit ideas from your parents. […] I don't know how to define it; it has to do with values and attitudes and the like, which are often inherited. Or it

becomes a tradition. In Milltown, it has not been necessary to start a company; you know, there has always been an employer here who has ensured that you get a job. […] Starting your own business has not been an option here. […] So we also work quite a lot on getting young people to become *more enterprising.* Not that everyone should become an entrepreneur, but being more enterprising, we think, would be good.

<div align="right">(Interview with local business manager)</div>

In Milltown's activation centre, the coaches quite literally attempted to foster the characteristics assumed to be associated with the entrepreneurial self; that is, physical fitness and the kind of 'take-on-ability' referred to by the business manager above. Aside from filling out forms, applying for internships and the like, as part of their weekly schedule, participants were here encouraged to attend the local swimming pool and gym once a week in order to work out:

> We go to the gym by car. Some ride with Micke, and others with the coach. Conny and the coach have a smoke before entering. […] Although everyone thrives in the gym, Christian is the one who knows his way around, knowing what machines to use and what they do, and so on. The guys go hard. Oskar pedals an exercise bike and soon starts sweating profusely. […] Compared with some of the other activities, from the guys' point of view, it seems as if the milieu allows for their masculinity, or their image of it, to be expressed.

<div align="right">(Field notes)</div>

In this way, besides formal qualifications and knowledge in self-presentation, in Milltown, the notion of employability was associated as much with physical features. However, this is not surprising. In fact, activation schemes may sometimes include dietary advice as part of their rationale (Tranquist 2007). Considering that business administration scholars have stressed that health has increasingly become an entry ticket into the labour market (Holmqvist & Maravelias 2006: 19), the activation centre's emphasis on physical workout thus instead seems reasonable.

In Milltown, I learned that physical training and nutrition were among the 'life skills' taught at the centre. Since at a supranational level, this notion often includes 'psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems [and] think critically and creatively' (WHO 2003: 3), this thus gives witness to the process of translating and editing policy concepts to fit with local circumstances (Sahlin & Wedlin 2008). Consequently, after being transferred to the local level by the coaches at Milltown's activation centre, life skills translated into bodily discipline, hygiene routines and cooking. As it turned out, the latter activity took up a large proportion of the week's scheduled activities. Every Tuesday, there were discussions on what meal to prepare as a group activity on Thursday, in turn requiring grocery shopping on Wednesdays:

> The discussion on what to cook on Thursday resembles a homework in-terrogation. 'And what do we have in a lasagne, Peter? Come on, think!' [the coach] urges. Peter, with his significantly mischievous look, smiles, and then looks at Micke. They both smile in agreement. 'Well, you have minced meat… tomato… lasagne sheets…' 'Good, Peter!' [the coach] praises, now laughing along as if she was suddenly struck by the absurd-ity of the situation.
>
> (Field notes)

Thus, in Milltown, participants' physical features, personal hygiene and their ability to prepare a range of cheap and nutritious food appeared to be important life skills for active and employable individuals. As mundane as this may seem, the practices nevertheless highlight the salience of well-ness in today's society, where success has become synonymous with self-control among active middle-class people (cf. Cederström & Spicer 2015). Therefore, the centre's operations may be understood as both specific and from the perspective of both coaches and participants as practical ways of governing Milltown's homebound. Overall, I suggest that the practices described in this section represent a bioethical aspect of activation. Here, the centre's gym activities in particular, were appreciated as they enabled the participants to reproduce a self-image as working-class people willing to 'dig in' when required. In this way, rather than running counter to and transforming the industrial mentality, parts of this bioethical aspect of acti-vation instead seemed to harmonise with it.

Fostering the disabled self: Project 2

From an outsider's perspective, the transition from Project 1 to Project 2 at Milltown's activation centre in many ways seemed generally undramatic. That is, as both projects had similar aims of mitigating social exclusion in the community, they both supported the participants in finding places in the labour market, either through internships or by motivating them to resume their education. Thus, both projects included practices such as assisting the participants to complete various forms required for their activity support,[4] as well as with the aforementioned exercise and cooking. However, one as-pect differed considerably between the projects. At the start of Project 2, I noticed that the language and approach to the participants had changed. During the morning meetings, for example, the tone the coaches used with the participants – which had always been hard but hearty – was now becom-ing gentler and more empathetic. This, I learned, had to do with Project 2 receiving financial support from the ESF's new *Tear down barriers to partic-ipation* programme, which was geared towards a whole new target group:

> The project focuses on young adults aged 16–29 with neuropsychiat-ric disabilities, as well as prospective employers. The young adults will

receive the support required to enter work or studies in parallel with employers being offered broad support for employment and competence-enhancing initiatives. The goal of the project is to achieve social inclusion for all participants (studies, work or internship), while simultaneously increasing employers' knowledge about the target group, thus affecting their attitudes towards employing these young adults, who possess enormous strengths.

<div align="right">(Official description for *Project 2*, my translation)</div>

The fact that *Project 2* was geared towards individuals with neuropsychiatric diagnoses is not surprising considering the vast increase in so-called attention disorders in recent years. For instance, between 2003 and 2013, the United States witnessed a 41 percent increase in ADHD (*attention deficit hyperactivity disorder*) diagnoses (Schwarz & Cohen 2013). Moreover, according to one of the most comprehensive autism spectrum disorder studies ever conducted in Europe, there has been a dramatic and steady increase, showing that among the 11 Member States participating in the survey, as many as 1 in 89 children may be affected by autism (ASDEU 2018).

According to Conrad (2007: 67–69), the increase in neuropsychiatric diagnoses throughout the Western welfare states reflects what he labels a 'lay–professional alliance' by which pharmaceutical companies, schools, parents and not least individuals themselves, seek to decipher and understand themselves through biomedical knowledge. Likewise, Rose and Abi-Rached (2013) have indicated that the study of human conduct has increasingly been redirected from the domain of the social into that of the brain and its neurochemical processes, attributing ambiguities and hardships in life, such as unemployment and passivity in the present case, to neurochemical asymmetries.

Interestingly, I noticed that some of the participants enrolled in Project 2 had attended the previous project. Naturally, I wondered whether all participants in Project 2 had received one of the diagnoses mentioned above. I learned this was not necessarily the case. Instead, a comparison of ESF's project description with that of Milltown on the municipality's website and the centre's Facebook page, a slight reformulation, marked in italics below, seemed to have found its way into the text.

The project focuses on young adults aged 16–29, who have *or may be suspected of having*, neuropsychiatric disabilities.

<div align="right">(Excerpt from Project 2's local project description)</div>

This subtle reformulation of Project 2's description enabled the coaches to enrol individuals in the project who had not received neuropsychiatric diagnoses. At this time, I learned that because Milltown is a relatively small community, the reformulation was necessary to fill the required quota of participants for the municipality to secure funding from the ESF. By extending the local target group to individuals suspected of having biomedical

conditions, the coaches at the centre, with their local knowledge of Milltown's young adults, could detect neuropsychiatric symptoms. Moreover, they were now motivated to re-evaluate the individuals enrolled in the previous project who had not secured a job. Although none of the coaches had either the expertise or experience of neuropsychiatric examinations, nor any professional experience of the target group, when I asked whether they knew of any prospective participants, I received responses such as the following:

> 'We know several [of the pupils in Milltown's schools] who probably have [neuropsychiatric] diagnoses. We take early notice of that.' She turns to the other coaches in the room, asking loudly: 'Hey, what diagnosis do we think Jennie has?'
>
> (Field notes)

As this example reflects, in Project 2, the coaches at Milltown's activation centre seemed more confident in their professional roles. This, I argue, had less to do with their having acquired experience at the centre and more with their mastery of discourse. That is, whereas methods such as MI, and various policy concepts such as employability and life skills, may appear ambiguous and somewhat difficult for laypeople to apply and understand, in Project 2, the coaches were expected to adopt the biomedical parlance that they had already mastered owing to the strong influence of neurobiological discourse in modern society.

The entwining of institutions and subjectivity is well established (e.g. Goffman 1991). As Miller (1994: 288) has indicated, institutions may be understood as 'situated conventions' that make 'some ways of talking and interacting available' while 'making other ways of assessing or orienting towards each other seen inappropriate or undesirable' (Hansen Löfstrand & Jacobsson 2022: 7). In Milltown's activation centre, this was reflected in the morning meetings for Project 2 becoming something of a 'therapeutic room' (Dahlstedt 2008), where participants were encouraged to share information on their medical statuses. Here, the coaches could ask the participants to talk about topics such as whether or not they felt depressed or if anyone wanted to share their state of mind with the group:

> The conversational climate is open, and there is no doubt that 'the medical side' is at the centre of [Project 2]. Sussi, who I find somewhat blunt (although she might also be a little tense in my presence?) asks Lenny in front of everyone how things are going with his new medicine: 'How's the medicine, then, Lenny? Have you tried to cut it down somewhat?' Lenny stares down at the table, and then answers softly: 'Yes, I have cut it down a bit now.' The rest of the group is now silent; the humour is gone, and in unison, the participants lower their shoulders and avoid eye contact. It puts me in mind of prey avoiding its predator.
>
> (Field notes)

Lenny, who was 27 years old at the time and whose problems mainly consisted of anxiety – which is not uncommon for someone who has been unemployed for an extended period of time – was obviously not comfortable with the coach talking so openly in the group about his medical condition. This, I reasoned, may have had to do with the composition of the group, which also included people without diagnoses. Here, the possibility that clinical anxiety and/or depression is now more stigmatised than the so-called attention disorders, should also be considered. As I show below, today the salience of the neurobiological discourse is even reflected in processes of reification, whereby, for example, neuropsychiatric diagnoses such as ADHD and Asperger's syndrome[5] are depicted on wall posters.

Enabling through disabling? Subjectivity reminders and resistance to biomedical subjectification

As Lipsky (2010: 59) has pointed out, an important part of the processing of people into clients involves 'the way people learn to treat themselves as if they were categorical entities'. Apart from the above-mentioned changes in approach and language observed in Milltown's activation centre, I also noticed changes in the physical environment. What I label 'subjectivity reminders' here refers to various symbols and signs encouraging participants to re-evaluate themselves as functionally varied subjects. For example, during breakfasts in the centre's kitchen, a whiteboard stating, 'We were born to be real, not to be perfect!' was placed on the table, encouraging participants to accept their various deviations from the norm. Moreover, hung on some of the centre's walls, I noticed various framed posters depicting neuropsychiatric diagnoses, such as ADHD and Asperger's, together with positive adjectives, such as 'passionate', 'pioneering' and 'enthusiastic'. As such, they formed a kind of collage that I recalled seeing in various stores and on the Internet. In line with ESF's project description quoted above, they emphasised that individuals with neuropsychiatric diagnoses possess various strengths and assets, thus supporting re-negotiation of neuropsychiatric disability (see, for example, Sunnerfjell & Jacobsson 2018: 318, on the notion of ADHD as a 'superpower'). The fact that such posters can now be purchased as mainstream decor further illustrates the strength of the neurobiological discourse (Rose & Abi-Rached 2013). Of course, in light of the active inclusion strategy, fostering disabled subjectivities may appear contradictory. However, by enabling so-called wage subsidies, a diagnosis may function as an entry ticket into the labour market, hence reflecting a process of enabling through disabling.

    However, whereas some participants in Milltown's activation centre were more than willing to adopt neurobiological identities (cf. Clarke et al. 2003), others were more reluctant to re-evaluate themselves in light of biomedical knowledge. During one of the centre's afternoon drop-in sessions, for instance, I noticed that the coaches had considerable trouble encouraging

a young woman attending the centre to undergo a neuropsychiatric assessment. When I asked the coaches what seemed to be the problem, one explained that 'She cannot read. And she does not understand facial expressions and the like.' The latter trait reflects common knowledge in relation to Asperger's syndrome, and I decided to spend the rest of the afternoon in close proximity to this young woman to explore for myself her struggle to find a place in the labour market.

Although initially rather shy, the young woman nevertheless turned out to be both witty and knowledgeable. Soon, she gladly engaged in discussions on work, the future and popular culture:

> After a while, [the young woman] comes in. […] She is wearing a leather jacket and has red curly hair. She smiles. I notice her red spectacle frames, which are quite modern and give her a trendy look. I immediately note her sense of humour. […] Today, she is filling in the Public Employment Service's 'career ladder', a 42-item questionnaire that will generate a job profile. […] I'm sitting beside her, leaning against a wall pretending to read a brochure. [She] reads the text aloud for the coaches to hear, and she does it excellently. With considerable cynicism, she exclaims with quiet laughter while ironically reading out what she considers to be strangely worded questions: 'If you could choose to be a helpful nurse, or… [she interrupts the reading], no, you want to be a mean and unhelpful nurse, right?' I can't help but smile as I continue pretending to read the brochure. […] [She] finishes the 'career ladder' which rendered the gerunds 'Theorising and analysing' to her so-called 'job profile', which to me seems congruent with her persona.
>
> (Field notes)

Despite motivating participants to decipher and understand themselves in terms of neuropsychiatric conditions by using both biomedical language and 'subjectivity reminders', the scene described above nevertheless shows resistance to subjection and governmental subject formation (Dean 1995). While some participants were ultimately diagnosed with neuropsychiatric diagnoses after being enrolled in Project 2, I later learned that the young woman's refusal of neuropsychiatric assessment had paid off. Confident in her decision not to undergo the process of re-evaluating herself in terms of neurobiological malfunctions, I learned that she never received a diagnosis, and had managed to enrol at an independent adult education college where she could fulfil her dream of becoming a professional game designer.

Conclusions

At a time when the very sense of self and aspirations of welfare clients are increasingly targeted and subjected to intervention (cf. Rose 1999), this chapter has explored how the supranational active inclusion strategy is managed and

resisted locally in a distinct industrial community that, for generations, has nurtured working-class, and thus presumably active, bodies and subjectivities. Through an ethnographic exploration of an activation centre for young adults aged 16–29 who were neither studying nor working, this chapter contrasted two ESF-funded projects. Although the specific activities at the centre did not differ greatly between the projects, including support with finding internships, filling out forms and gym activities, Project 2 showed that the coaches' approach to the participants started to change. Heeding a new ESF call for young adults with neuropsychiatric diagnoses, the coaches now intervened in the self-image of participants in more elaborate ways, adopting the biomedical language and what I have labelled 'subjectivity reminders'. This term refers to encouragement by the centre for participants to decipher and understand themselves in light of the neurobiological discourse. Despite lacking professional experience of either medicine or psychology, the coaches were here clearly more comfortable with biomedical parlance than with the methods and terminology of supranational activation policies, illustrating the influence of neurobiological discourse in modern society (e.g. Conrad 2007; Rose & Abi-Rached 2013).

In this way, whereas Project 1 tended to reproduce rather than transform a so-called industrial mentality, in contrast, Project 2 aimed at fostering functionally varied subjectivities, reflecting the somewhat paradoxical practice of using diagnoses to enter the labour market via the enabling of wage subsidies (cf. Holmqvist 2009; Sunnerfjell & Jacobsson 2018).

However, despite the influence of biomedical knowledge in society, it has been shown that not everyone is susceptible to the adoption of neurobiological identities. Here, the chapter exemplified resistance to neurobiological subjection, illustrating the distinction between 'governmental' and 'ethical' subject formation (Dean 1995).

Overall, by departing from the transformation of a presumed industrial mentality, this chapter reveals the complexities of intervening in individuals' self-understanding, showing that activation policies are always translated and edited to fit local rationalities. Although governmentality may indeed form a fruitful thinking tool for the study of human malleability, the notion that government is always subject to rupture and resistance needs reiteration to minimise the risk of the concept being applied in an overly perfunctory manner.

Notes

1 This is a pseudonym, as are all names of people described in the chapter.
2 Before 2013, this only applied to people up to 25 years of age.
3 However, this can be problematised. An illustrating example is given by Richard Sennet (1998), who after 25 years, made a return to a bakery in Boston only to realise that what used to be a profession requiring solid knowledge of things like fermentation temperatures, ingredients, and dough texture, now mainly consisted of monitoring machines.

4 Between approximately 8,000 and 10,000 SEK a month before tax.
5 With the publication of the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) in 2013, Asperger's syndrome was included in the overall diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. However, in the 10th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10), the diagnosis remains.

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8 The Problematizing and Counter-Conducting Subjects of Financial Education

Jane Pettersson

The world has changed, and so should you!

> The lecturer explains: "In the 50s and 60s all you needed was a job and a salary, and then you could take out a loan. You only needed a job to get a pension. But during the 70s and onward, the economic growth has slowed down to today's 2%". The lecturer proceeds to list today's worries: "We cannot expect the interest rate on mortgages to remain at zero percent. We don't know what pension payments we will get. We borrow a lot of money. A lot of people don't have a financial buffer. We live longer. In the old days, we started working when we were young, but today we expect the state to support us while we 'find ourselves'. Then at the age of 30 we start working for our pension. That won't do!"
>
> (Field note *Secure Your Financial Future*)

The extract above is from one of the many courses offered by the Swedish financial education network *Like Your Personal Finance*. Behind these courses stands a constellation of government authorities, private financial companies, banks and NGOs aiming to educate Swedish citizens on finance. The Swedish FSA is the network coordinator. The lecture quoted above was held at a course called *Secure Your Financial Future*, which was tailored to fit citizens, in general and teach participants a broad range of subjects related to personal finance, financial markets and financial products. The theme of the lecture quoted above was "The world has changed". The lecturer explained to the participants why they needed to revise their personal finance management. The field note neatly illustrates financial education in general, and the most essential message is "Because the world has changed, so should you" (Engdahl et al. 2019; Lazarus 2020; OECD 2013; Pettersson & Wettergren 2020). Reflecting the national and international discourse of financial education, the title of the course – *Secure Your Financial Future* – tells participants to ensure they protect their own financial future; it is not realistic to expect the support from the Swedish welfare state to which we were previously accustomed while we, as the lecturer puts it, waste time "finding ourselves".

Furthermore, the field note illustrates that financial education does not merely entail teaching citizens the "facts" of finance and how "the numbers work", but also involves attempts to foster financially savvy and self-reliant subjects. Hence, financial education is a site of governing and transforming subjectivities, a form of neoliberal governmentality (Foucault et al. 2007; Marron 2014; Pettersson & Wettergren 2020) attempting to make citizens financial "entrepreneurs of themselves" (Foucault & Senellart 2008: 270).

Research has shown that the increased interest and focus on citizens' knowledge of finance is intertwined with the societal process called *financialization* (Finlayson 2009; Lazarus 2020; Marron 2014; Pettersson & Wettergren 2020; Weiss 2020; Wolf 2018). The concept describes the shift from industrial to finance capitalism whereby the realm of finance has come to play an increasingly important role in the functioning of national as well as corporate and household economies. In short, financialization research has shown how finance has developed way beyond its function as a capital provider for the productive economy, reaching even into everyday life via products such as mortgages and savings funds – and, in particular, via the pension system (Belfrage 2008; Belfrage & Kallifatides 2017; Davis & Kim 2015; Erturk et al. 2007; Krippner 2005; Lapavitsas 2011; Mader et al. 2020; Montgomerie 2020; van der Zwan 2014). While critical and often Foucault-inspired analyses of financialization (e.g., Ahnland 2017; Langley 2006, 2007) and of financial education (Marron 2014; Pettersson 2021; Pettersson & Wettergren 2020; Santos 2017) have successfully analysed and revealed the ideological and normative premises taken for granted in discourse, they have tended to neglect the likewise important issue of whether such governance attempts actually create the subjects they seek (however, for a critical discussion of the performativity of financialization, see Gonzalez 2015; Pellandini-Simányi et al. 2015). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to reduce the present knowledge gap concerning the issue of how the governance attempts of financial education are received by citizen attendees. The following analysis investigates how participants (re)acted to what they were taught about financial savviness and attempts to transform them into good financial subjects.

Below, I first discuss the theoretical concepts of counter-conduct and problematization used in the analysis of how participants of financial education (re)act this educational content. A short background of financial education follows, including a section on method and this case. I then proceed to the analysis, and the chapter concludes with a discussion.

Problematization and counter-conduct as features of everyday life

Contemporary practices of governmentality, just like the historical precedent of pastoral power, are intended to "to take responsibility for people's conduct, to conduct people" (Foucault et al. 2007: 197). As described in the

introduction, research on financial education has applied Foucault's concepts of governmentality and the conduct of conduct to show that financial education attempts to foster financial subjects (see above). Intrinsic to the practice of conducting people is the game of power and freedom, where the power of government relies on the freedom of the conducted, who, faced with a range of possibilities, choose to be conducted. The objective in governing human beings is therefore "to build subjects who are *voluntarily* subjugated [*assujettis*]—subjects who *want* what the other wills, who *want* not to will anything different from the other, and who *want* not to will" (Lorenzini 2016: 11; see also Davidson 2011). Thus, the concept of conduct entails both the conducting of others as well as "the way in which one conducts oneself (*se conduit*), lets oneself be conducted (*se laisse conduire*), and finally, in which one behaves (*se comporter*) under the influence of a conduct as the action of conducting or of conduction (*conduction*)" (Foucault et al. 2007: 193).

An important Foucault concept for the analysis in this chapter is problematization (Foucault & Rabinow 1991). Often this concept is used to explain how discourses and norms are created to legitimize intervention and the government of populations. As Rose and Miller explain, government is a problematizing activity (Rose & Miller 2010). Foucault and Rabinow (1991) described problematization as a process of something entering into thought, a process of "freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects it as a problem" (Foucault & Rabinow 1991: 388). Thus, if we also understand problematization as a recurring feature of everyday life: the process of creatively reflecting on the troubles and disturbances we encounter, and not only as a feature of government from above (Barnett 2015; Barnett & Bridge 2016), the concept can account for various rationalities of action that participants in financial courses express. In addition, there are other important reasons for problematizing; namely, as a way to investigate critically one's own or others' experiences to expose their limits, or even to transform specific experiences (cf. Lemke 2011).

While the concept of problematization may explain participants' reflections on issues such as finance as well as the attempts to foster them as financial subjects, I suggest Foucault's elaboration of different forms of conduct may help us account for the actions participants' talk about doing or having done in relation to these matters. Specifically, the concept of counter-conduct is useful for this purpose. When introducing the notion in *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978* (2007), Foucault claims that we will find forms of counter-conduct in the game of power and freedom that constitutes all forms of government of people. In defining the concept, Foucault et al. (2007) distinguished counter-conduct from other notions such as "revolt", "disobedience", "insubordination", "dissidence" and "misconduct", explaining that these are either too strong, too weak, too local, too substantial, too political, or too passive (see also Davidson 2011). In short, counter-conduct can be understood as the refusal

to let oneself be conducted in this or that way (Lorenzini 2016: 4). Counter-conduct is thus a form of resistance. Although it is not necessarily politically charged or revolt-like, it is nevertheless a struggle against the procedures of government. While counter-conduct challenges the subjectivity imposed on an individual (Demetriou 2016; Lorenzini 2016), it is not about not wanting to be governed at all, but rather how not to be governed so much, in such a way, by certain people, and with "such an objective in mind and by means of such procedures" (Foucault et al. 2007: 199; see also Lemke 2011; Lorenzini 2016). While Foucault, after 1978, implicitly replaced the concept of counter-conduct with that of critical attitude, emphasizing the *will* to resist, like others, I argue that counter-conduct has the advantage of being a more inclusive notion of resistance (for a more elaborate discussion of this issue, see Davidson 2011; Lorentzini 2016).

To summarize so far, understanding financial education as a form of governmentality that attempts to transform financial subjectivities indicates that the object of financial education is to conduct attendees' behaviour and conduct in relation to financial issues. Financial education affects the possibilities of the attending subjects and attempts to make them conduct themselves in a more financially savvy way. However, as I show in this chapter, subjects are not that easily remoulded. Arguing that counter-conduct and problematization are features of everyday life, the analysis shows that power does not only operate by subjugation, but also through the subjects' own power to form and conduct themselves in relation to their own experiences and concerns.

In the following section and before proceeding to the analysis, I provide a short background of financial education, including a section on method and the case in point.

A case of state-led financial education

Since the late 1990s, international organizations such as the OECD, national governments, and sundry authorities, private finance actors and expert bodies have claimed that citizens' lack of financial knowledge is a serious threat not only to their household finances but also to the global economy. Thus, the financial education of citizens is considered a pressing issue (Engdahl et al. 2019; Lazarus 2020; OECD 2013; Pettersson & Wettergren 2020). In 2008, the Swedish FSA was commissioned by the government to strengthen consumers' positions on financial markets through education. Two years later, the FSA began collaborating with Swedish banks, private finance companies, other authorities and NGOs to create the *Like Your Personal Finance* financial education network. Since then, network members have co-operated to provide finance courses for citizens with the goal of achieving "financial self-confidence for all" (www. https://gilladinekonomi.se).

The education network uses a wide variety of pedagogical formats and tools, such as a Facebook group, podcasts and apps. It provides free education

material for schoolteachers to download from its website. However, the core consists of live courses. The network also reaches out to potential stakeholders such as municipalities, other authorities, trade unions and other organizations, offering them free tailored financial education courses for their clients. Often, the network uses a "train the trainer" strategy, whereby they educate people such as civil servants or union representatives, who, in turn, pass the knowledge on to groups such as immigrants, students, or various categories of employees or colleagues. The network targets a wide range of citizen groups, from ordinary citizens to so-called at-risk groups.

The data in this chapter are drawn from a larger study of Swedish financial education, for which most fieldwork was carried out between May 2017 and April 2018 using methods such as interviews, group interviews and participant observations during courses. Field notes were taken during lectures, breaks, lunches and dinners: They record conversations with lecturers, organizers and participants, as well as notes on "shadowing" (Czarniawska 2007) the movements of participants visiting authorities or finance companies. In addition, policy texts, educational material and other relevant documents have been analysed. A total of 14 interviews (including three group interviews) involving 27 people were conducted (with course participants, organizers and lecturers), lasting from 30 minutes to 2 hours. Participant observations took place during four two-day courses targeting different groups. One course was for those categorized as uneducated and unemployed young people. Another was for people working with immigrants, a third course was for civil servants working with legal guardians, and the fourth was for trade union-affiliated pension and insurance informants. The fieldwork also included a visit to a workplace information meeting on pensions, and a repeat visit to a youth project following a financial education course held there. All participants were informed about the purpose of the project as well as the conditions of their participation in accordance with the principles of ethical social scientific research listed by the Swedish Research Council.

In this chapter, I visit a two-day financial education course called *Pension and Insurance*, and meet some of the 15–20 attendees. The course was tailored to fit trade union-affiliated workplace informants; thus, it was a "train the trainer" course. Participants attended as part of their trade union duties during paid working hours as pension and insurance informants at their workplaces. The aim was for them to learn as much as possible about pensions, enabling them to make active well-informed financial choices regarding their own pensions and to guide their colleagues to do so. This course is the second of two courses with the same theme held for the participants. In other words, when the participants took this course, they had already completed the first of two two-day education courses on the subject of pensions and insurance. The two courses are generally given at intervals of about six months. Between these two courses, the attendees have had the opportunity to exercise their role as informants on pensions and insurance

at their workplace. During the *Pension and Insurance* courses, participants were taught how the Swedish pension system works, with an emphasis on the individual choices that influence one's future pension, such as how to choose equity funds for occupational pension savings. The interview with participants was conducted a few weeks after they attended their second course on pension and insurance. During these, we talked about both their thoughts on the course and its subjects, and whether or not they practiced the course teachings in their own pension planning and everyday life.

In order to grasp how participants of financial education (re)acted to the educational content and the attempt of transforming them as financial subjects, I analyzed how the participants (re)acted during the course as well as their talk about their own views and actions in relation to the course during interviews.

According to one of the main lecturers on the *Pension and Insurance* course, the goal is "that everyone shall become able to make informed decisions regarding their pension. What does that mean? Well, that's up to the individual!" (Field note *Pension and Insurance*). Thus, in line with the overall goal of this course, as well as the overall discourse of financial education, focus was placed on becoming a financial subject in terms of having the capacity to make well-informed individual decisions and choices about one's own finances – in this case, a future pension. As we will learn from the lecturers on the course, there are "rules of thumb" for how this "free-to-choose financial individual" makes well-informed decisions.

Summoning subjects for pension planning

The lecturer says to the participants: Now, we are going to talk about the challenges: What's difficult?
- "People are stressed, they don't have the time!" [to engage with their pension choices], says one participant.
- "My colleagues, they don't want information, they want advice!" says another participant.
The lecturer explains that they [the participants] must tell their colleagues that they need to turn to experts if they want advice [pension and insurance informants only give information and are not allowed to give financial advice]. If they have questions on which equity funds to choose, they should turn to [occupational pension company name], if they need help with calculating [on the costs of different choices], they should instead turn to [second occupational pension company name], if they want the whole picture, they should turn to the pension authority and log on to the *My pension* website. […]
The lecturer continues: "Avoid advisors [stockbrokers] on the street", "Information is perfect – taking advice is something else!", "You can make your own choices if you ask the right questions", "Ask about the fee!" […], "A lot of people want to retire early, call [the occupational

pension company], they'll help you to calculate how much pension you'll lose". The lecturer uses an example and talks about how much money one might lose if one retires at the age of 55 while calculating the numbers on the whiteboard. She says it is important to calculate the numbers before making pension decisions.

   - "Why would anyone want to retire at 55?! Well, if you're filthy rich!" says one participant.

   - "For God's sake, make the calculation first!" says the lecturer.

<div align="right">(Field note Pension and Insurance)</div>

In the extract above, the lecturer refers to the most essential messages of the course. *First*, she speaks about mandatory freedom of choice. Swedish citizens must make their own choices on where to invest their pension. However, the freedom to choose does not apply to the entire pension balance, only to the occupational pension and a limited part of the public income pension. Because the freedom to choose is built into the system, citizens that do not actively pick equity funds have, by definition, made the passive choice to invest in the default alternative.

Second, and consequently, the lecturer warns about taking investment advice from just any stockbroker "on the street", meaning that participants should make sure only to take advice from someone certified by the FSA, that is, the "experts".

Third, because the participants attended a "train the trainer" course, they were taught not to give financial advice to colleagues asking for help, only information; the participants are not certified by the FSA. However, interestingly, one does not require advice from an "expert" before making these choices for oneself. Likewise, one does not need to be an "expert" to make one's own investment choices. As the lecturer says, "you can make your own choices if you ask the right questions". However, as one of the participants commented, this fact troubles them because their colleagues do not want information, and they do not have the time to engage in their own pension choices; their colleagues want advice on how to invest.

Fourth, the lecturer gave the participants a "rule of thumb" for their investment choices when she said, "Ask about the fee!" The participants were told several times during the course that a high fee on equity funds is something of a pitfall because they reduce the profit from the investment. In other words, they may pay more than required.

Last, the lecturer mentions that more options are built into the system than "just" where to invest, for example, the choice of when to retire. The lecturer claimed that many people want to retire early. However, she warned and pleaded with the participants to do the calculations before making such a choice. The lecturer's warnings also seemed to have reached the participants as one of them said: "Why should anyone want to retire at 55?! Well, if you're filthy rich!", thus stating that retiring early is not for everyone. Another "rule of thumb" is not mentioned in the field note above;

nevertheless, it was repeatedly stated during the course. It is that one should choose investment risk levels depending on how far one is from retirement. A young person can choose high-risk investments, thus taking advantage of fluctuations in financial markets. Closer to retirement, one is best to choose a lower risk as it is a safer option.

Financial savviness – the wrong way or not at all

During the two-day course, the lecturers repeated the above messages: the warnings and rules of thumb. At first glance, the messages seemed to get across to the attendees. As I "shadowed" the participants, talked with them during breaks, walks and after the course, as well as in interviews with some of them, they told me that they were content with the course and that they had learned much from it. Some participants echoed several messages of the course such as the importance of being "aware" and "well informed" about one's future pension because there is an opportunity to influence it financially. However, when I asked the participants about their own practices with their pension and whether they follow the rules of thumb presented to them, their stories and actions do not seem to match the discourse. One example is the story below:

> One could say I speculate […] because I felt, I don't earn much, so then I thought something like, "what the hell, it can't matter! Both my children have jobs, so … […]. Well you know, let's speculate!" So I put my money, some of the money, in … .as one shouldn't do [as participants are told not to during the course] when one is 60 years plus, like I am. Instead, one should have secure, nice and easy [funds] so one knows one will get the money back. I have that money in high-risk funds now. So, I have to check on them in the newspaper. […] I check on them every now and then so I can sell them fast. I may lose them anyhow. Well, well, if one doesn't take chances… […] It's the same thing as not buying funds with high fees [as participants are taught not to do during the course]; I've taken some chances on that too. Now, I have one with a high fee, and it's doing really, really, well. After this summer, I'm going to trade that one. I've only had it for six months to raise the amount [profit] a bit, then I'll buy something else. I trade quite often, I tinker with some… […] What the hell, I've always said that if everything goes to hell, I'll rob the bank! […] I don't know, they say one should let the investment rest when you're saving long term [also taught during the course]. I mean, I'm 61 years old, Hello?! Why not play with the money a bit? If everything goes to hell, it goes to hell! [Laughs].
>
> (Interview person 2. *Pension and Insurance*)

The interviewee tells us about herself. She is over 60 years old, she has two grown-up children who support themselves, so she only has herself to take

care of now. She knows what kind of a "good" financial subject she "should" be; she has been told to play it safe at her age, and she knows she may lose her money if she does not. This is one of the rules of thumb. However, she shows counter-conduct to the call to become a good financial subject by taking chances with her pension. She is not passively misbehaving, managing her finances wrongly as a consequence of not understanding how she should do. The woman knows the rules of thumb but does not follow them. She gives three reasons for this; first, she says she has not "earned much" and therefore sees "speculation" as a chance to receive a better pension. Second, she believes in taking chances; she believes that by taking chances, she may gain or lose, but if she does not, she might lose anyway. Last, she believes that if "everything goes to hell" it will, whether she takes chances or not, and either way she will manage. In fact, she already does manage her pension savings by "tinkering" and "playing" with some of the money. She laughs and jokes. She de-dramatizes any seriousness of the issue. In one respect, she does fulfil the ideal of the good financial subject: she actively manages her pension. She arrives at her own decisions and choices through problematizing how she is told to manage her pension savings; she detaches herself both from her own way of doing things and from the ways in which the discourse of financial savviness encourages her to be and act. She reflects over her own opportunities and who she believes she is. Meanwhile, she makes sure to have fun.

However, not all participants have fun or de-dramatize to reflect on and grasp their choices in the pension system. Other participants problematize and act in counter-conduct to the course advice because they believe other life events and experiences are more important to them than "good" budgetary pension planning:

> I've been thinking about maybe *not* working until I'm 65 years but leaving earlier. Because I…six years ago I was ill, pretty ill. Yes, it could have gone really badly. It was cancer, then. Now, I'm fine. It got me thinking, though. It's kind of…yes, there are other things in life too, besides working. That's how I think. There are fun things to do, and they don't have to cost that much, things that are fun. I read a lot, just to be free. Something like that.
>
> (Interview person 1. *Pension and Insurance*)

This interviewee states that she knows one should work until the age of at least 65 years; not doing so will have negative effects on the pension. Nevertheless, she is considering *not* working that long anyway. Her life experience of having cancer and being cured has taught her that there are other things in life than work and money. She talks about liking to read, and about being "free" or "something like that". A similar topic was raised by another participant; namely, the experience of life and of time not being without limits. Below we hear from a participant's reflections on how she felt and about

taking time to make financial choices for her future pension as she problematized the issue in relation to other priorities in her everyday life:

> I walk over to the kitchen counter where some participants stand together talking. One of the participants, a woman (in her fifties) talks about how she ought to be keeping track of her pension, of how her "pension funds are doing", but she hasn't yet. Earlier she told me that she is one of "them", who made an active choice on pension funds at an early stage of the pension reform, but after that, she has done nothing. Now, she says, she is going to take care of this "problem" and investigate how her pension "is doing". However, she explains, she won't be doing it right now because her mother-in-law is ill and hospitalized, and her daughter will be graduating soon. She has a lot to do right now. She talks for a while about her mother-in-law being ill. She looks worried when she talks about her mother-in-law – frowning and talking in a low voice. She says that when things calm down and she gets some peace and quiet she will sit down one evening and review her pension funds.
>
> (Field note *Pension and Insurance*)

As we know by now, participants were given rules of thumb during the course, to start them on the road to becoming responsible financial subjects making good financial choices for their pension. The most basic advice was to log on to the pensions authority's website and become acquainted with their own future pension and their choices of funds. The woman in the excerpt above told us when we were standing around her in the kitchen that this was what she was going to do as soon as she had an evening of peace and quiet. According to several lecturers during the course, this is especially important if the person has already chosen funds, as this woman said she had. Those who choose funds poorly but do nothing about it will lose pension money. The attendees were told about this during the course. They were told that many citizens who chose pension funds when the system was new in the 1990s have lost money because they never followed up on their choices. Despite knowing this, the participant in the field note clearly believed she should first take care of other pressing issues; her mother-in-law and her daughter's graduation. She was worried about her mother-in-law, and planning for her daughter's graduation was important to her. Problematizing the good financial subject, she found that what she was taught to do was at odds with other pressing and important responsibilities in everyday life. When she explained this to us, no one objected. Neither did she strike me as bitter nor burdened by her obligations; she did not sigh or comment on being weighed down by these obligations. She just told us that she had to prioritize and had found that her choice of pension funds could wait.

As we saw in the first section of the analysis, the participants' colleagues tell them that they feel stressed and that they have no time to engage with pension planning. Several times during lectures, participants mentioned

their colleagues' remarks on financial pension plans, "Oh, it's such a pain; it's so hard", or "Pensions? Oh no, that's boring!" (Field note *Pension and Insurance*). Thus, there seemed to be several obstacles to engagement in financial plans, such as that it was boring, time-consuming, uninteresting and difficult to understand, or other everyday obligations and life concerns were given priority.

When thoughts of life and death get in the way of becoming a financially savvy subject

Recall that one lecturer stated that the goal of the pension course was "that everyone shall become able to make informed decisions regarding their pension. What does that mean? Well, that's up to the individual" (see above). On the other hand, lecturers were telling participants not to underestimate their longevity, probably because the Swedish population, in general is growing older and living longer.

In the following field note, a participant reflects over the choice of when to retire and the period over which the occupational pension should be paid out. She problematizes the issue in relation to her expectation for her own longevity:

> Visiting one of the pension management companies: We are sitting around a large conference table. The lecturer [working here] is talking about what happens with one's pension if one decides to retire early; one loses money. He talks about the choice to take out the occupational pension straight away, or over five years, 10 years etc., or for life. The important thing is that one should understand how the choices one makes affect one's life and one should not underestimate one's longevity. The participant sitting on my left [a woman in her late 50s] turns slightly and discreetly to me. Half whispering, she says that the issue of when to retire as well as the period of time one should take the occupational pension depends on [pause].... She says, "In my family, many of my relatives have died early; we die early in my family. So, maybe it's better for me if I take out my pension payments straight away [she turns quiet for a few seconds, then giggles a little]. One has such weird thoughts when one talks this much about retirement and pension planning. What if I die early, but what if I don't?"
>
> (Field note *Pension and Insurance*)

As this field note shows, the recommendations concerning when to retire and retrieve pension payments become much more complicated when they are no longer generalities or mere statistical problems, but involve questions of life and the prospect of death. The woman that sat beside me at the conference table problematized what the lecturer said and how it might affect her life and her choices. The pension system forces her to make choices, and the discourse

of financial education encourages her to take on this responsibility because only she can decide how to live her life. However, enacting financial subjectivity by making individual choices about the pension was clearly easier said than done. Faced with the choice of the occupational pension being paid out for five or maybe ten years, or for the rest of her life, she tries to calculate how long she might live, taking into consideration how long her relatives lived. Hence, she may die as early as her relatives, or she may not. The woman giggled at her own thoughts, maybe because she found life unpredictable.

As the above participant said, all this talk about retirement and pensions evoked thoughts and reflections on old age and even death. As we shall see in the field note below, it also evoked thoughts about relating to these future issues here and now:

> We [the participants, one of the lecturers on the course and I] have just been on a visit to the Swedish Pension Authority and heard a talk about the public pension. We are walking in small groups, chatting on our way back to the premises where we started the day. I ask the woman [in her late 50s] walking next to me about her thoughts on the course so far. She is silent for a few seconds before saying, "I'm genuinely uninterested in my pension [pauses]. It can't all be about retirement and pensions; one has to live life".
>
> (Field note *Pension and Insurance*)

The woman in the extract above is not unique in her disinterest, nor in putting "living life" in conflict with making plans for retirement or at least financial plans. Several of the participants expressed similar thoughts. Pension planning is sometimes, as here, problematized as being the opposite of living here and now; as the woman says, "one has to live life", meaning she cannot be bothered to make financial plans for her retirement because she wants to live life here and now. During an interview with another participant (a woman in her early 50s), talking about saving privately, in general (not in equity funds in the pension system) as well as for retirement, she expresses similar thoughts about "living life" to the woman above:

> I'm not like, lavish. But, sometimes one wants to treat oneself. One doesn't just want to save, save, save, all the time. Yes, one only lives now. Now, I got kind of a little flashback; I get those sometimes, like: Aha! I'm actually living here and now… then suddenly I will die and then I no longer exist […]. When I get old, I will die. I don't want to die, I want to live for a very long time, but what if I don't? Then I've been saving for something…and then… . It's like there are two different messages in my brain. I don't know, I can't take it in, it becomes a bit strange. I don't want to be lavish, and I don't want to save too much, I want balance. But I'm living now, I don't know what's going to happen in the future.
>
> (Interview person 3. *Pension and Insurance*)

The interviewee problematized just how unpredictable life was to her. Even though it was important to her that she was not a lavish person, at the same time she said that she did not know what tomorrow might bring; therefore, she wanted to live in the moment and sometimes treat herself. Simultaneously, these questions were confusing to her and she said she wanted balance, but it was hard for her to grasp what it all might mean for her life. She did not want to save her money for a time that she might never experience. She did not know whether she would grow old, but she knew she was living now. This story also gives us clues about why becoming a financially savvy subject may not be such an appealing transformation. For her and the participants above who claimed, "One has to live life", not making financial plans for their retirement means they want to enjoy life now as, in fact, they are still living it.

Concluding discussion

As described early on in this chapter, the game of power and freedom is intrinsic to contemporary governmentality; the power of government relies on the freedom of the conducted to choose subjugation (cf. Foucault). The above analysis shows the practice of this game of power and freedom in the case of the financial education course *Pension and Insurance*. First, the main lecturer established the subjects' freedom of choice as she claimed that the goal of the education was to give the attendees the knowledge they needed in order to make "informed decisions regarding their pension", what this means, the lecturer claims is "up to the individual". As this freedom is assumed to be established, the attendees are thereafter given the rules of conduct for financial savviness. Thus, the attendees are given both basic information about how the pension system functions and the rules of thumb for how they should conduct themselves in order to become financial subjects. Thus, being informed is not enough to become a self-reliant and savvy financial subject; the participants needed to freely choose to conduct themselves in accordance to the rules of thumb in order to transform. As we have seen, the attendees were continuously warned about the consequences of not following the rules. In accordance with the course's message, the financially transformed subjects do no longer need expert advice because they financially fend for themselves.

The most basic assumption of the *Pension and Insurance* course was that being active and financial planning for the future and retirement is vital. Consequently, the participants were taught how the pension system works and what choices are built into it. After this, the attendees were advised to get to know the current state of their own individual pension.

This first step to financial savviness is easily accomplished by logging into their personal pension page on the Swedish Pension Authority's website. There they should familiarise themselves with their future pension, equity fund choices and other options. However, after this first step, the rules of

thumb for pension planning became complicated. For example, participants were warned about risky investments and high fees, retiring early and withdrawing their entire occupational pension directly upon retirement or in a too short period of time. The participants were told that they may choose to do these things despite the warning; however, it would have a negative effect on their financial situation, so it was not the financially savvy thing to do.

As we have seen, the participants were not that easily remoulded. On the one hand, they said they were content with the course and claimed to have learned much from it. On the other hand, they problematized and showed counter-conduct to what they had been taught by lecturers when relating the teachings to their own experiences and subjectivities. In addition, while financial education portrays the future as able to be foretold, participants found it unpredictable. As we have seen in the analysis, the absence of open revolt among participants does not imply obedience; neither does doing financial subjectivity in the "wrong" way imply passive misbehaviour. I argue that we may understand what the participants did as counter-conduct; they offered resistance and instead worked on themselves in other more important areas – in relation to other central experiences and relations in their everyday life. As the attendees detached themselves from the teachings of financial education, in other words, reflected over what they had been taught and related the financial teachings to their own life concerns, beliefs and everyday experiences, they found that these financial rules of thumb were not easily compatible with their lives.

The way the attendees of the *Pension and Insurance* course related and reacted to the teachings of financial education is not unique in relation to their counterparts in other courses. During my fieldwork, I participated in other such courses and talked to attendees. They all problematized the financial messages conveyed to them to a lesser or higher degree. However, as the *Like Your Personal Finance* courses are adjusted to suit different categories of citizens, the subject matter of courses differed. Consequently, the attendees reacted to the specific subjects raised. In this chapter, we have heard from workplace union representatives that attended a course on financial pension planning. The attendees of this course reflected over issues relating to their own future retirement.

As I have shown in the above analysis, in the process of problematizing, the participants detached themselves from the course messages as well as from their own actions, subjectivities and everyday life experiences. Reflecting over these issues, some participants, rather than being remoulded themselves, remoulded the ideal of financial savviness to suit their own life and subjectivity. Other participants, in their reflections, decided to disregard financial savviness altogether, such as when they said that they would not bother to engage in financial pension planning at all, but wanted to live here and now.

As contemporary governmentality, the discourse of financial education has its own discontinuities and contradictions. While rules and warnings

during the course were attempts to conduct the participants in a specific financial direction, the participants took note and latched onto other aspects of freedom of choice built into the system. A poignant example of that was one participant preferring to "speculate" with her pension, buying high-fee and high-risk products, hoping for a higher profit than lower-risk and low-fee alternatives might bring. De-dramatizing her choices, she jokingly said she would "rob the bank" if she lost her investments. As the lecturers pointed out, many people want to retire early, even though this has negative effects on their pension. Retiring early was what one of the interviewees said she planned to do. Having experienced a near-death encounter with cancer, she then thought of the fun things in life that do not "need to cost that much" like reading, and "just being free".

To conclude, government always contains components of freedom as well as power. As Foucault claims, government relies on subjects voluntarily choosing to be conducted. Hence, conduction never fully regulates the possibilities of subjects (cf. Foucault). In addition, "[o]ur subjectivity accommodates multiple dimensions and identities" (see the introduction to this book). In this chapter, I have used the concepts of counter-conduct and problematization, arguing that these are features of everyday life. Addressing the malleability of human subjectivity, I have shown that in the process of problematization, where detaching oneself from one's own behaviour, in this case, in relation to new "information" about how one should become a financial subject, the subject faces a range of possibilities. Faced with possibilities, the subjects of financial education showed counter-conduct, that is, struggled against aspects of the attempt to conduct them and against the imposed financial subjectivity. As we have seen, the attendees do this in favour of their priorities and how they know and care for themselves, their everyday life and lived experience. These concerns did not fit the financial subjectivity they were encouraged to perform.

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9 State-Sanctioned Educational Initiatives Aimed at Transforming Adult Immigrants

Interpretation, Negotiation and Resistance

Marie Carlson and Nanna Gillberg

Introduction

Different social models for integration and citizenship have been discussed in Europe, both in research and politics (cf. Joppke, 2007). In the Swedish context, state-sanctioned educational initiatives (cf. Heinemann, 2017) have been developed for adult immigrants. As in other migration countries, their practice and content have shifted according to prevailing political and economic situations, but the fundamental aim to inform and transform the targeted individuals has remained (Borevi, 2014; Vesterberg, 2015). Since the 1960s, Sweden has offered Swedish language courses entitled "Swedish for Immigrants" (hereafter SFI). Language training has reflected economic cycles, changes in immigration policy and educational and labour market issues (Ahlgren & Rydell, 2020; Carlson, 2002). In 2010, civic orientation was made mandatory for all newly arrived immigrants who have received a residence permit (SOU 2010:16). Alongside SFI, newly arrived migrants are thus expected to take a civic orientation course to acquire basic knowledge about Swedish society. The course constitutes part of the establishment programme for which the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) is responsible. The social orientation course was separated from SFI in 2007 with the aim of giving the latter "a more pure focus on language teaching" (SKOLFS 2006:28).

Political and policy-making discussions and the media have put much emphasis on mandatory civic orientation. These discussions have usually concerned the "values and norms" to be included in the courses. Immigrants have been called upon to demonstrate that they are "active citizens" in the process of becoming "productive" and self-supporting even if they do not apply for citizenship. It has been stressed that civic orientation should focus on "civic spirit" and a "citizen perspective" (SOU 2010:16). The focus on being active and productive is explicit in the textbook *About Sweden,* used by many municipalities in their civic orientation courses. One of the longer chapters is about the Swedish labour market: being employed, looking for work and

paying taxes (2018, pp. 77–121). This implies that labour market participation constitutes a fundamental component of a "good active citizen".

In addition, the Swedish welfare state has undergone comprehensive changes during the past decades, following the principles of New Public Management (NPM) (cf. Carlson & Jacobsson, 2019; Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019). These changes have affected both SFI and civic orientation, focus of this chapter, as part of a restructuring and tendering of adult education. The municipality where we studied a business course linked to SFI, launched early procurement for all adult education (Beach & Carlson, 2004). Marketisation has also affected civic orientation courses, although the municipality, where the study took place had not outsourced civic orientation.

The empirical data in this study come from two interdisciplinary research projects in sociology and business administration. The periods of data collection were characterised by increased migration and growing tensions between discourses on the rights and obligations of adult immigrants living in Sweden.

The aim of the chapter first is to critically investigate how the project of transforming adult immigrants into citizens and labour market participants was articulated at the two course sites studied. The aim, second, is to make visible how the articulations relate to the self-understanding of those engaged in as well as those who are the targets of transformation. The chapter thus focuses on the responses of both the professionals involved in the transformation process and of the immigrants who are its targets. The chapter asks: Which are the salient characteristics, values and norms in transforming adult immigrants into (a) citizens and (b) labour market participants? How does the process relate to the self-understanding and expectations of the immigrants as well as of the professionals engaged in the governance of adult immigrants? We see identity – for both, professionals and immigrants – as shaped by, and enacted through, their performances in relation to the different categories by which they are confronted. Three themes were highlighted in our analysis: "Responses to neoliberalism and governance", "Criticism of employment services and the Swedish labour market" and "Responses to devaluation and low expectations". The chapter is based on policy ethnography informed by a narrative approach. Comprehensive interdisciplinary migration research exists, but very few detailed ethnographic studies (cf. Abdulla, 2017; Rosén, 2013).

Next follows a presentation of the theoretical framework; mainly the concepts governmentality/governance and narratives. This is followed by a section on data and method. Then follows an analysis that attends to themes in the two datasets. In the concluding discussion, the chapter's findings are summarised and discussed.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is primarily informed by the concepts of governmentality and governance. A brief description of narratives is also included.

Governmentality and governance – the simultaneous position of the individual as an object and a subject

Governmentality (Dean, 2010) offers a suitable analytical concept for highlighting how state-sanctioned educational initiatives in many countries, including Sweden, for many years, have been used as technologies to inform and transform adult immigrants. In the condensed form referred to by Michel Foucault as "the conduct of conduct", governmentality takes aim at how human behaviour is directed to follow societal norms in ways that reproduce a specific order and leave the prevailing discourses in a particular social and cultural context and time unchallenged. Following Foucault, we understand governmentality as "techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour" (Foucault, 1997, p. 82) and as "an activity that undertakes to conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide responsible for what they do and for what happens to them" (Foucault, 1997, p. 68). "Government" denotes a variety of authorities, strategies and technologies that individually and collectively engage in efforts to direct the behaviour of individuals towards complying with objectives serving to produce a certain result (Dean, 2010; du Gay, 2000). The currently predominant ideology prescribes both the results aimed for and the preferred ways of achieving them. In a neoliberal frame of mind and practice, the desired results are active, capable, self-reliant and responsible individuals (du Gay, 2000; see also Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019; Dean, 2014). Developing such individuals requires the installation of an ethic of self in those subjected to governance efforts. The ethic of self then regulates the field of action available to them by means of perception and self-perception (Foucault, 1997).

Normalisation processes constitute an important part of governance. Through these processes, certain behaviours, practices and traits are established as normal and correct. Individuals are then sorted in accordance with their correspondence to what is considered normal. Normalisation processes work on the individual both from the outside and the inside through the individual's position as both an object and a subject of governance. The surrounding world nudges the objects in desirable directions by describing and prescribing specific paths. Simultaneously, norms are internalised into the individual's self-understanding. The desired end product of this subjection/subjugation to disciplinary power is a compliant subject who acts in accordance with predominant norms without having to be coerced into or even told to do so (Foucault, 1979. In line with the neoliberal ideology's ideal citizen, who is active and capable, and who adopts an entrepreneurial approach to the self and participation in society (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019), governance efforts such as programmes, strategies and courses regularly advocate economic self-sufficiency in their subjects. What this leads to is a pronounced emphasis on labour market entry and study enrolment. Normalisation processes serve to produce individuals who are either considered as in concordance with or deviating from a certain norm. Those who are

constructed as the deviating "other" are commonly defined as a negation of the norm, that is, seen as everything that the norm is not (de Beauvoir, 1949; Hall, 1992; Silow Kallenberg & Sigvardsdotter, 2019), and, based on that definition, they are marginalised and/or excluded.

Previous research has highlighted the contradictory character of governmentality, linking neoliberal assumptions to the opportunity for individual agency (McNay, 2009). Swyngedouw (2005) shows how "the conduct of conduct" of citizens is carried out in ways that preserve existing power relations and normative ideas. Freedom is an obligation just as much as a right and, as such, should be spent and made use of in specific preferred and prescribed ways – through entrepreneurial forms of self-enhancing activities (Rose, 1998). McNay (2009) asked, to what extent political resistance is possible when autonomy is both constructed as the foundation for individual agency and used as a key tool in the governance of individuals (and hence, in the production of their "ethic of self"). The neoliberal appropriation of autonomy, he suggested, risks annihilating the very foundation of political resistance.

Narratives

We see *narratives,* another important concept, as *social products* produced by people within the context of specific social, historical and cultural locations. Narratives do not originate individually; rather, they circulate culturally to provide a repertoire from which people can draw to produce their own stories. In other words, our argument is that not only do people often produce "storied" accounts of themselves and their relation to the social world, but that the social world is also itself "storied" (Andrews, 2007; Kvale, 1996). The narratives to which individuals are subjected through their surroundings are internalised and form a basis for the development of expectations of what life will have to offer, what opportunities are available and what choices can be made (what Gillberg called "expectation structures", 2018, pp. 110–111). These expectations can be said to constitute an individual's perceived field of action (Foucault, 2001), and they contribute to directing the individual's actions and behaviours. We identify various narratives that respond to governance. For example, we identify reinterpretation and resistance narratives, as well as compliance narratives.

Data and method

The empirical data were mainly collected in 2009 and were derived from one sub-study focused on SFI linked to a business course. For the other sub-study, focusing on civic orientation, the empirical data were collected between 2017 and 2018.[1]

Data – the two sub-studies

Empirical data were integrated into the analysis. Both sub-studies were mainly based on policy documents, observations at educational sites, course material and interviews (all recorded and transcribed) with various actors. The primary focus was on various professionals and their narratives on policy and governance practices. However, we also included occasional direct examples of voices from participants.

In one sub-study, Marie Carlson and the anthropologist Bengt Jacobsson investigated a business course linked to SFI and organised by ABF Adult Education (AAE), an education company rooted in the Swedish Workers' Educational Association (WEA). Interviews were carried out with educational leaders in the municipality, SFI teachers and administrative staff. The course lasted two terms with two teachers, one SFI teacher and one teacher specialised in business education. Its aim was to provide students with knowledge about Swedish trade and industry, and also to give them relevant language skills. The first term was shared, while term 2 included modules preparing for work in shops or starting one's own company. In the study, we followed term 1 with 25 participants.

In another sub-study, Nanna Gillberg observed civic orientation classes. The interviews were carried out with communicators and administrative staff. Observations and informal interviews were also conducted at a job fair. In 2010, a steering document, an official government report (SOU 2010:16) concluded that civic orientation course leaders were to be called *communicators* and that skills other than a teacher's degree were required. Much emphasis was to be put on dialogue and reflection in the courses. The civic orientation course was to be given in the native language of the participants (or another language with which the participants were familiar). In practice, the language requirement implied that the communicators had either immigrated to Sweden themselves or were the children of parents who had immigrated to Sweden.

Method

We combined similar methods in both sub-studies and addressed similar research issues. Our ethnographic presence was a salient part of both research projects. We were interested in the narratives of all the actors we met, focusing on the discursive dimensions of policy processes and listening to how various actors "tell their stories" (Andrews, 2007; Czarniawska, 1997). Both studies used policy ethnography, which focuses on the relationship and transformation process between an official policy and, in this case, the educational practices in relation to immigrants. This can be compared with institutional ethnography (e.g. Miller, 1994), but in our case, we have specifically examined policies that surround our respective studies and we therefore prefer to call it policy ethnography. Policy texts go through

various educational contexts and venues in which meaning is produced and communicated, and in which, actors design a policy practice based on different interests, skills, traditions and power resources (cf. Dubois, 2009). This approach meant that we identified and highlighted recurrent narratives among both the professionals and immigrants policies, for example, narratives of resistance or narratives of renegotiation. Policy was interpreted, transformed and implemented differently by various actors. There were also reactions such as resistance/negotiation to "new" policy, mostly from the professionals, but also from various course participants.

Thematic analysis

Below, we have structured three themes.

Neoliberalism and governance: transforming subjectivities of professionals and immigrants

As mentioned, the Swedish welfare state has undergone comprehensive changes during the past decades, following the principles of NPM. In both cases, this meant more control, administration and increased focus on surveillance, documentation and auditing (cf. Lapsley & Segato, 2019). For example, attendance and throughput of the courses were very important, as the participants received less financial compensation if they were absent. Some professionals experienced a crossfire of external and internal "demands". One SFI teacher commented on the ever more numerous and comprehensive work assignments included in the pedagogical role at AAE:

> This isn't what I did my education for. I keep getting given masses of administrative work and having to report stuff, all of which I really dislike and sometimes even think is morally dubious. For example, Social Services made me report one student's attendance last year. His absence on a trip to Iraq since his mother was seriously ill made his difficult economic situation even worse. His maintenance support was heavily cut. I felt very sad and frustrated when I heard that, especially since he broke off his SFI education for economic reasons /…/

The SFI teacher above, clearly felt that the link had been ruptured between a professional ideal – the feeling of both personal and professional identity – and the work actually being done (Ball, 2003). One result, for example, was less professional discretion (Lipsky, 1980) – in reality an altered teacher identity. Throughout our interviews, professionals expressed resistance towards both the governance to which they were subjected and the governance to which they were expected to subject immigrants. The focus on enforcing rules and taking attendance made many professionals uncomfortable as they perceived it as deviating from their professional role. The teacher's comment above

reflects a common critique of NPM, for having increased the regulation of teachers' professional practices and circumscribed their room for manoeuver (Stenlås, 2009). Much attention has been called to the "administration society", in which a substantial part of working time is allocated to documentation and registration at the expense of the presumed core activity of teaching (Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2014). All this documentation can be seen as a steering mechanism consisting of evaluation and revision, a *monitoring culture* (Power, 1999) or as Ball puts it: "performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)" (2006, p. 144).

In the civic orientation course, the emphasis on attendance was also manifest. Attendance was a requirement to be eligible for establishment benefits. For each session, the participants had to bring a personal attendance sheet for their communicator to sign. It was then to be submitted to the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. The administrative practices of the governance system could be said to articulate Foucault's (1997) "conduct of conduct" regarding both professionals and participants. This is an example of everyday policing and control, which has quietly crept into educational and other public institutions, as part of the neoliberal ideology's strive for auditing and documentation. Through these practices, norms prescribing individual responsibility for members of society were expressed and reproduced.

Another example of governance was the content of the lessons and their structure, as both sub-studies showed. The classroom observations in the business-oriented language course illustrated the governance exercised by the three textbooks. Each lesson was focused on the content of the current text section, reducing the scope for dialogue between teachers and course participants and among course participants. The format also excluded discussions and critical reflections. The majority of the participants took notes diligently and were repeatedly encouraged to do so. "This is sure to be included in the test" was a frequent utterance by the teachers. To maximise participants' chances for good test marks, teachers wrote summaries of every book chapter (business-oriented language course, field notes).

Both teachers and course participants appeared here to be very malleable. They adapted to and complied with requirements, rather than question them. The civic orientation course was similarly governed through the structure provided by the centrally produced course material. All communicators were expected to follow the same structure in each of the 20 sessions. The structure was provided by the textbook *About Sweden*, available in 11 languages including Swedish and English, with PowerPoint slides specific to each session. When state-accredited teaching material is used, like the textbook *About Sweden*, it further conveys the norms and rules, and helps to produce "good" citizens in Sweden with very restricted political agency. Ensuring that all participants were exposed to the same written material was referred to by some professionals as a quality control measure.

Both sub-studies demonstrated governmentality through the common aim to expose course participants to a certain structure and content that through internalisation processes would appear "normal" and be taken for granted (Dean, 2010). In concordance with the neoliberal ideal (cf. Dean, 2014), course participants' engagement, freedom of speech and diversity of opinions were encouraged. This freedom, however, took place within a certain framework that set the stage for what could be said and talked about. Aligned with Rose's (1998) description of freedom as both a right and an obligation, participants were expected to be active, engage and conform to an entrepreneurial ideal. However, the boundaries and ways of enacting the prescribed agency were set by the course structure and content (Swyngedouw, 2005).

The content of the business course was largely focused on obtaining a job or on business activities. Much of the talk about school and education was also characterised by what in Sweden is called the "work orientation", an ideal and norm for all adult citizens (Carlson & Jacobsson, 2019). Education must be completed as swiftly as possible and the individual must be flexible, adaptable and strive to be employable. This "work orientation" involved diminished professional discretion in the pedagogical enterprise (Evetts, 2003; Lipsky, 1980). This focus is also visible in the civic orientation course in which there is a long chapter in the book *About Sweden* devoted to how to enter the labour market and what the individual should consider especially. Values and norms in teaching materials are always linked to a societal context and governance documents. Since 2010 (SOU 2010:16), civic orientation for newcomers has been increasingly homogenised in order to provide a national standard clearly focused on norms and values to achieve better integration. Most municipalities use the textbook *About Sweden.* It is considered an instrumental part in standardising the content to which participants are exposed and has regularly been revised, especially regarding values and norms. It can be argued that by using *About Sweden* as a guide, based on steering governmental documents as it is, both participants and communicators are included in a kind of "Integration/Civic Orientation Course" as well as a "Values Course". In *About Sweden,* the chapter dedicated to the labour market is very neutrally descriptive throughout, with the process of looking for a job presented as easy and straightforward. This upset many participants and communicators, who complained that the course material downplayed the adverse conditions facing newly arrived immigrants when seeking entry to the Swedish labour market. We could interpret this as a civilising mission in disguise. In particular, many critical voices from both professionals and participants were heard against the Swedish PES.

Narratives of resistance: criticism of employment services and the Swedish labour market

A recurring theme among professionals and course participants alike was criticism related to the Swedish labour market and its lack of accessibility.

Particular critique was directed at the Swedish PES, the public authority in charge of the establishment programme for newly arrived immigrants. Counterproductive regulations and rigid linear sequential processes were identified as governance that served a gatekeeping function and prevented immigrants enrolled in the establishment programme from gaining entry to the labour market (Fejes, 2010; Vesterberg, 2015). It has also proved very difficult to validate previous qualifications and earlier experiences (Andersson et al., 2013; Carlson, 2006; Diedrich, 2013). Below is an extract from a conversation between one of the chapters' authors and a participant at a job fair arranged by the Swedish PES in collaboration with public and private employers:

> At the job fair, I meet a man with strong opinions about the Swedish labour market system. The man approaches me, asking me what employer I am representing. When he finds out that I am there to collect data for a research project he decides to stay and share his thoughts on the job fair. Looking out on the many people attending the fair and the stalls, he labels the fair "Games at the Community Hall" and goes on to describe it as a "masquerade", a "reality show", and a "film". He says that he is originally from an African country. He has lived in Sweden for a long time, but has never managed to secure a job and describes it as "completely impossible" to get onto the labour market. "If you have been in Sweden for a long time, the door is closed", he says. He has attended the fair several years in a row and claims to see the same people returning, indicating that the aim of creating jobs for those attending is not being reached. When asked why he comes back in spite of not believing that the fair will help him get a job, he says: "I come to meet people. I'm not married."

The man's critique then moves to the state-sanctioned system within which the fair operates. He is highly critical of the system by which external job coaches are hired by the Swedish PES to support job applicants in their job search and match them with suitable job opportunities. The job coach arrangement, he claims, is unfavourable to job seekers as it only produces internships and no real jobs. "Immigrants only get to do internships", he says. He describes how the internships locks job seekers in and prevent them from applying for real jobs. Job seekers registered at the Swedish PES must accept the internships that they are offered or their social security benefits can be revoked. Once you start an internship, you are not entitled to apply for other jobs. Before the man leaves my table, he concludes: "There are only three options in Sweden: Internship, education, and social security benefits" (civic orientation field notes).

  Using irony and metaphors to expose the perceived deficiencies of the system, this man created agency for himself while resisting the governance practices to which he was subjected as well as the role that he had been

allocated within the governance structure. This can be linked to criticism of the pedagogical material in *About Sweden* in the chapter on jobs and the labour market, as we wrote earlier. There were both participants and communicators who strongly criticised this chapter's neutral text and the absence of discussion of problems.

The labour market's distinguishing between internships and permanent employment can be seen as an expression of immigrants being treated as "the other" when acting in the capacity of job seekers (cf. Silow Kallenberg & Sigvardsdotter, 2019). Through the remuneration structure, immigrants were made to comply with internship offers, while proper employment was reserved for non-immigrants. In the civic orientation course, participants expressed the same notion of internships being used as dead-end place-ments instead of constituting opportunities for proper employment. Resist-ance was shown in statements to the effect that one might just as well refrain from showing up at internships since they did not lead to jobs anyway. A similar example appeared in the business course when both teachers and participants recounted how responsibility for arranging internships was placed on the participants instead of on the administrators at AEA, who were formally in charge of organising internships. It was described with much irony as "a grandstanding". The responsibility was moved to the in-dividual, who was expected to present her-/himself in an entrepreneurial spirit (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019). In relation to arranging internships, one SFI teacher narrated:

> It's frustrating. I keep thinking I must get away from it. I can't bear working like this, meeting the students and knowing what I want for them, but that I can't do. This apprenticeship requirement for example. It's a requirement that when you've reached a certain language level, you must go and do 30 hours of apprenticeship to get your money. And that's considered more important than our pedagogical concerns about how to form good study groups, effective teaching, so that everybody gets what is best at their level, and so on. I mean, all those words about individualisation, they're worth nothing.

Several teachers expressed such views. They shared the perception that their pedagogical discretion and professional autonomy were obstructed by the demands and logics governing the enterprise (Ball, 2003; Evetts, 2003; Lip-sky, 1980). Several teachers resigned during the research project and were looking for employment elsewhere. Not all teachers were malleable. This could also be defined as a conflict between "occupational professionalism" and "organisational professionalism" (Evetts, 2003; Stenlås, 2009), the latter implying that people other than teachers were largely setting the agenda. Some teachers thus offered resistance to "organisational professionalism".

The job fair episode and the quote from the SFI teacher also tell a story of governance in the sense depicted by Swyngedouw (2005) and Rose (1998),

according to which job seekers should display agency but only in particular ways sanctioned by the structure in which they operate. According to the man at the job fair, the accepted ways of displaying agency worked in practice to prevent the kind of agency that would contribute to the proclaimed goal of the governance, that is, economic self-sufficiency. This was manifested through governance structures requiring governed individuals to accept work offers that served to tie them down in precarious work arrangements. The professionals, in their role of governing subjects, were also governed in the sense of being expected to act as representatives of the governance system and its prescribed conduct, pedagogy and course material.

There has been recurring talk about immigrants' deficient language skills – particularly by the Swedish PES, which previously stopped immigrants from becoming active jobseekers if they could not show a so-called SFI level (Carlson, 2002, pp. 122–135). Nowadays, there are different grades within SFI. However, according to many linguists (e.g. Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017), various actors, politicians and officials have tended to express uninformed views about the language skills of adult immigrants. These discourses occurred in both sub-studies, also among participants. Some researchers have characterised the language issue as the single most traumatic element in the daily lives of new immigrants – sometimes internalised by the immigrants themselves (cf. Bunar, 1998, pp. 23–24). Especially adult immigrants have not been listened to regarding their linguistic needs, both in working life and in daily life, in general. In both sub-studies, voices expressing various views on language ability were heard (cf. Ahlgren & Rydell, 2020). Tensions arose, especially among the professionals, between an "occupational language approach" and a view of language also taking broader identity into account. Professionals and course participants were united in their criticism of the narrow view of languages in the governance system. This resistance was expressed in the quotes below by teachers:

> For AEA, occupational language is more important than the language resources needed by participants privately and in the democratic process in the community.
>
> (educational administrator, formerly a teacher)

> I think language has much to do with identity, like who you are and how much you can assert yourself in various social contexts and also your self-image and all that.
>
> (SFI teacher)

> I think it's all about developing our students' language skills so that language becomes a tool enabling them to participate in discussions and debates on social issues, so they can become citizens and use their language in different social contexts.
>
> (SFI teacher)

The broader view of language acquirement articulated by SFI teachers mirrors the broader notion of integration put forward by staff on the civic orientation course. The professionals deviated from and resisted the instrumental and more narrow focus of the Swedish PES on language and integration related primarily to labour market participation. The SFI teachers emphasised self-image, identity and democracy and the civic orientation staff represented a broader view of integration that included housing and the opportunity to take part in all areas of society.

Many interviews and observations reflected a perceived conflict between language acquisition and language requirements in the establishment programme and labour market context. A linear sequential process, according to which each step had to be completed before the next step could be initiated, was said to cause difficulties (Bunar, 1998; Carlson, 2006). A communicator from the civic orientation course ascertains previous statements:

> INTERVIEWER: What are the most important barriers then (for achieving integration)?
> RESPONDENT: The language.
> RESPONDENT: /…/ And the other thing, they say, are the rules in Sweden, a bit strange. It should be changed.
> INTERVIEWER: How? /…/
> RESPONDENT: /…/ Example doctor, teacher, engineer, lawyer. Then I agree with the Swedish system, have to learn the language because it concerns people's lives, like doctor. /…/ carpenter, construction worker, whatever. I mean they have experience, instead of sitting in school for a few years /…/ You work, instead of working hours, you can work for four hours and four hours can be SFI /…/ Out in the labour market, you feel psychologically better because if you sit at home and don't do anything, you feel bad. That costs a lot of money.
> INTERVIEWER: You mean these regulations that say that you have to have a very high level of Swedish although it might not be needed for that job?
> RESPONDENT: Mhm. /…/
> INTERVIEWER: Do you hear that your participants have views about this /…/?"
> RESPONDENT: They always do, because they pose the question "why is it like that?".

The interview excerpt reflects how governance within a neoliberal frame, in spite of emphasising freedom and agency, serves to preserve existing power relations and normative notions (McNay, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2005). While individual initiative is expected and valued, it must be shown in certain ways and under specific conditions only. Initiative taken outside of the recommended framework might instead be viewed as defiant – an act of noncompliance that, in some cases, was penalised.

One administrator on the civic orientation course argued that the emphasis on a good command of the Swedish language to get a job is often downplayed and not sufficiently problematised in public debate on labour market integration. Formal language requirements becoming a politicised issue in discussions on migrant reception means that acknowledging the existence of any actual language requirements for job acquisition is controversial:

> …there is some hypocrisy in that we don't let on that it is of huge importance, the language thing. And it's controversial to say that it is. But then we can't at the same time say that you are not allowed to enter various jobs unless you know Swedish perfectly.

Without necessarily opposing the emphasis of migrant reception on labour market entry as such, both professionals and participants contested the appointed linear chain of events that presupposed command of the Swedish language to acquire a job. Thus, course participants and educators were in alliance in their questioning and resistance. They highlighted the workplace as a "natural" setting to practise the Swedish language:

> Because if you work, then you speak Swedish. Then you meet people from maybe… Swedish and non-Swedish. But if you're just at home and don't work or go to school, then /…/ there are just immigrants if you get what I mean.
>
> (administrator and communicator on the civic orientation course)

Questioning devaluation and low expectations

A theme in both our studies was the devaluation of immigrants that the Swedish establishment system was perceived to articulate, perhaps partly due to validation difficulties. A deficiency perspective was also clearly evident in various statements in policy documents (e.g. SOU 2010:16). Several communicators brought up the difficulty for highly educated immigrants to find work corresponding to their training and level of education. Many communicators had personal experience of having to accept work that was not related to their professional background. Not having one's formal training from another country validated, was an issue raised by several interviewees:

> …(for) many engineers educated in their native country, entering the labour market is not easy due to lots of requirements of having to start over from scratch.
>
> (civic orientation communicator)

The statement illustrates the deficient validation processes, in which highly skilled immigrants are only offered training/education. Interviewees

mentioned how migrants would arrive in Sweden with high ambitions, only to resign when they perceived that their efforts were not rewarded. Low expectations placed on immigrants combined with unequal treatment and unequal access to the labour market were named as causes of passivity and feelings of alienation among newly arrived immigrants.

In many of the interviews and observations, the neoliberal notion of an ideal citizen was articulated, stressing the ability and drive of newly arrived immigrants. While the legitimacy of the governance is built around the narrative of "the free citizen", all individuals are expected to abide by set norms of what constitutes "good citizenship" and are constructed in relation to images of "an ideal citizen" (cf. Heinemann, 2017). A quote from a civic orientation communicator provides one such example:

> I actually believe it might be of value that people who have been driven their entire lives have managed in all kinds of very clever ways to get around half the globe to get here. I think they can have a lot more drive in them than to become dependent on benefits. And the passivity among them can create a lot more space for alienation.

Some interviewees on the civic orientation course related the underestimation of newly arrived migrants' potential to the capacity that migrants have demonstrated through their resettlement in a new country:

> They have actually managed to flee; they can manage to get into the labour market.
>
> (civic orientation communicator)

Once again, a deficiency perspective emerges. Participants are not attributed characteristics such as self-sufficiency. It is notable how an ambition of improvement operates as a frame of reference for various institutions that interact and work together to transform immigrants. Course materials and curricula both articulate a narrative of the ideal citizen for immigrants to aspire to – composed of entrepreneurship and individual agency. Teachers thus need to deal with a deficiency perspective that is pressured on them from the policy and with which they feel uncomfortable. Both teachers and participants offer resistance to the deficiency perspective, but in different ways as we have shown in the chapter.

Devaluation was present in written material directed at immigrants in the context of labour market integration as well. Below is an extract from a textbook that is used in the internship periods in business courses, describing working life in Sweden. The teacher specialised in business education says: "This is in order to link internship to learning how *Working life in Sweden* works…" This particular segment tackles the question "Why should one work?":

> The foremost reason for working is that one needs a salary for paying the rent, food and clothes. But the money should be sufficient for more than that. Most people want to be able to afford a car and be able to go on vacation now and then. Many people also want to save money for the future /…/ Others do not have the ability to earn money themselves, but get money from social welfare /…/ But we all need money to manage our lives /…/.
>
> (Håkansson & Söderberg, 2005, p. 10)

What thoughts do the authors have about the target group expected to read this text? Here a real truism emerges. It is obvious that all the course participants understand that you need to work to make a living. The text can readily be perceived as patronising.

According to interviewees, the current system contributed to reproducing certain outcomes by subjecting immigrants to low expectations. An administrator on the civic orientation course narrated how expectations placed on immigrants shaped their expectations about what routes were available to them in society:

> Because what happens now, I guess is that a lot is reproduced. For example, it is well-known that Eritreans don't have much in the way of visions for their future; it's more like: one should be a cleaner because all Eritreans are cleaners. If they can't even raise their sights or imagine anything else… Because they don't get it anywhere else, but they could get it here. But they actually don't get it anywhere else, because no one is pushing that issue.

Low expectations, conveyed by authorities and policies, and internalised by those subjected to them, illustrated the interactive character of self-perception formation referred to by Gubrium and Holstein (2008) as the "relational self". Participants from the business course also talked about their dreams regarding their career plans, but they were not encouraged by the system to follow their plans (field notes). They become trapped in some way. The same phenomenon was alluded to in the critique of society by civic orientation providers, who linked immigrants' internalisation of society's low expectations to passivity and resignation. The chain of events could also be understood as an articulation of Foucault's (2007) governance and normalisation processes, through which society's expectations work to regulate the field of action of those subjected to them through governance. In the process, specific paths and outcomes are normalised and made to appear given and/or inevitable. Normalisation processes relate to the construction of certain individuals as the "other", frequently on the basis of ascribed belongingness in a category such as immigrants. Knowledge hierarchies related to values, norms and social codes are constructed and met through interaction and negotiation in social practice (Hall, 1992).

Concluding discussion

The design with policy-ethnographic presence combined with a narrative approach offered a theoretically and methodologically complex understanding of educational practices, knowledge about actors' experiences, and the contexts in which policy was translated to local practice. Our studies allowed for different voices to be heard – professionals as well as course participants. We have shown policy intentions and different actors' interpretations, negotiations and resistance in practice.

Our reading of officials' speeches, policy texts and debates shows a discourse on immigrants that is commonly characterised by a deficiency perspective, and that implies the need for corrective efforts to develop subjects in accordance with normative views of model citizens. The Swedish government had, for example, in January 2018 tried to tighten its participation requirements for civic orientation courses by introducing a "course participation requirement" (*Utbildningsplikt*, Eng. "Educational duty"). This requirement along with public pronouncements and attitudes together form the "the discursive field" (Foucault, 2002) of citizenship and labour market participation. This framework also shapes a variety of societal institutions, including educational provisions such as civic orientation courses. Governance reveals the multiple everyday discursive processes in which citizenship regimes and their meanings materialise through mundane encounters and administrative practices. Overall, policy texts as well as teaching materials presented a partially condescending view of immigrants. Situated within a deficiency framework, immigrants were constructed as individuals who needed to be transformed into informed subjects, that is, take on the character of the prescribed ideal citizen. Both professionals and participants in the two sub-studies gave various interpretations of, negotiated, and often offered resistance to this view. The resistance and resignation of professionals were noted in relation to the governance initiatives' views of immigrants – many of which they actively contested – as well as in relation to the expectations on them as governance-enacting professionals. Resistance was articulated both verbally and in practice, with some teachers resigning as a consequence of the professional role assigned to them. Interpretation and negotiation of prescribed roles and depictions of society were observed when civic orientation participants challenged notions of how to acquire a job through networking. Resistance was offered in immigrants' narratives about a system that sets them up to fail.

While negotiations and interpretations often resulted in resistance, the data also demonstrated how governmentality caused resignation and passivity among immigrants and professionals when only one course of action was prescribed. For immigrants, resignation and passivity came about as a result of low expectations and the devaluation of immigrants in combination with a labour market policy that simultaneously prescribed and put up barriers against individual initiative. While resignation resulted in malleability,

the malleability did not correspond to the stated aims of the governance in place. The malleability of professionals was manifested in their compliance with prescribed practices with which they did not agree. The professionals' subjectivities meanwhile appeared less malleable as shown by the consistent criticism and rejection of various elements of the governance structure in which they were operating. Much of the criticism revolved around the rigid, linear and sequential processes characterising the Swedish labour market and impairing the opportunity for newly arrived immigrants to find proper employment. Particularly, well-defined sequences that had to be completed in a specific order were noted as problematic.

The "good citizen" defined in governance initiatives aimed at immigrants is characterised by self-sufficiency, initiative and entrepreneurship. State-sanctioned educational initiatives show that becoming a "good citizen" requires first becoming employable (cf. Garsten & Jacobsson, 2004) and second being flexible in relation to ordained educational initiatives. However, the way the governance system is designed presents obstacles for immigrants to take on these societally desired traits. Immigrants are expected to comply and be manageable – to attend courses, show initiative and use networks to acquire a job. In practice, malleability is articulated through resigned compliance to rules, regulations and incentive structures. The malleability hence does not produce the entrepreneurial conduct or subjects of whom the governance is stated to be in pursuit. The expectations on immigrants communicated through the governance initiative structure and the educational and incentive systems, according to governance professionals, all work to generate docility rather than the officially sought-after self-sufficiency and activity. The professionals are expected to act as loyal representatives of the governance system they are put in place to enforce. To display malleability, the professionals either have to concur with the governance practices and their underlying norms or comply with them regardless of their personal beliefs. Both types of malleability are visible in our data as is lack of malleability displayed by professionals who choose to leave their profession.

The discourses/narratives on adult education for immigrants in Sweden appear in a socio-political and cultural context of stability achieved by and focused on correction and governance. The transformation of adult immigrants through state-sanctioned educational initiatives is not new, but adapted to and built on already existing foundations.

Note

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10 Conclusion

Towards a New Research
Agenda

Cecilia Hansen Löfstrand and Kerstin Jacobsson

In this book, we have addressed many different types of governmental interventions targeting human subjectivity with the aim of transforming it. Each of the chapters is based on the rich qualitative empirical material that enables a thorough analysis of the formation and transformation of subjectivities in real-life settings, thereby allowing a nuanced analysis of the malleability of human subjectivity.

While all authors in this book have been enormously inspired by the literature on the *how* of governing (e.g., Dean 2008, Rose 1989, 1999, 2007), the chapters in this book add qualitative depth to the *how* of governing by studying both governing attempts and how various attempts at governing have been received by those subjected to such attempts: employees as well as clients and patients. The book thus provides findings about subjectivity formation of particular individuals in specific settings, thereby redressing the relative lack of attention by governmentality scholars to how technologies of government play out in real-life settings in the encounter with human subjects. Whether or not, to what extent, and in what respect human beings are (re)moulded—including how they adapt, renegotiate suggested subject positions and norms, and/or develop ways of resisting—are here considered empirical questions best researched in authentic settings by qualitative, often ethnographic methods and materials. As such, the book constitutes a response to the call by scholars such as Brady (2014, 2016) and Li (2007) for more ethnographic approaches in governmentality studies. Ethnographic studies of concrete governing attempts at particular times, places and situations enable us to take the 'messy' outcomes of governing attempts into consideration, and in this process, acknowledge individual and collective creativity. In contrast to other scholars primarily interested in technologies of government, we have explored, in addition, some of the outcomes of governing. The latter cannot be assumed theoretically but must be researched empirically.

Our choice of analytical focus, methods and materials, as well as our focus on the malleability of human beings in contemporary times, has resulted in a set of unique contributions. First, since all authors take an interest in not only governmental efforts to transform subjectivities but also in the outcomes and consequences thereof, the chapters in this book elucidate

processes of subject and subjectivity formation as practice; that is, as they unfold in real-life settings. Second, in this way, they allow for the analysis of a range of unintended consequences of governmental interventions in subjectivities. Third, with their focus on lived experience in different social settings, the chapters provide an analysis of the subjective experiences of governing technologies. Fourth, taken together, the chapters avoid a one-sided focus on only one type of targeted populations—marginalized groups subordinated in society—by including studies on employees as well as clients and patients. As human beings, we are all vulnerable to the power of governing attempts and governmentality, as well as capable of offering resistance. Fifth, the book contributes to a cross-fertilization of governmentality perspectives with ethnographies of institutional discourse, contributing to an understanding of the interplay between governing technologies and the self-governing of subjects in a variety of settings. As is richly illustrated in the chapters, subjects actively participate in this process, and this interplay is a site of possible adaption or resistance. Governing attempts may infiltrate the ambitions of individuals and do so under certain conditions, but are also resisted and may also, as we have seen, be adapted and fitted to subjective experiences, thus generating a different set of rationalities than those to which the governing attempts aspire. In the following, we extract a number of more specific insights from the chapters.

Human malleability in context

Several chapters in this volume explore the templates involved in attempts to achieve desired subjectivities, reflecting the utopian element in practices of governing (cf. Li 2007: 2). For instance, the use of models in human service authorities is based on the idea of humans—more precisely human dispositions—as manageable potentialities and of models as having the potential to control the mind frame or mentality of the humans subjected to them. Models 'work' since they help envision a brighter future (see Chapter 2). In a sense, models as technologies of governmentality work to the extent that they help human beings, for example, employees, envision a *seemingly predictable* future. They *may* transform the subjectivities of those using/applying them. At the same time, the chapters in this book add nuance by paying attention to factors conditioning the subjectification of individuals. One finding is that models more readily influence inexperienced (and younger) employees than experienced ones (see Chapters 2 and 3): experienced employees balance governing attempts with other elements of their professional identities and experiences (see also Alvesson and Willmot 2002). Hence, personal frames of reference and professional identities based on previous long experience in the occupation significantly limit the power and potential of models to transform the practices and the subjectivities of users. Moreover, we saw that models may serve many purposes, some of which are intended by governing agents, while others are not.

Another form of template for desired subjectivity is provided by organizational narratives, which turned out to be key in the process of shaping employees' subjectivities by 'storying' their experience and signalling ways of being appropriate employees (Chapter 3), particularly in times when political goals and internal management styles shift dramatically. With dramatic shifts in governance styles and objectives, confessions to wrongful practices in the past were yet another narrative style and managerial tool of importance in transforming employees' subjectivities including, not least, employees' own *will* to self-improvement along the lines of governmental rationality. Subjectivities are produced in the *interplay* between organizational narratives and individual experience, and employees' subjectivities are (perhaps surprisingly) malleable, although more experienced employees tend to resist new managerial trends and accompanying forms of subjectification. Moreover, in contrast to Foucault's focus on confession and work on the self as a distinctly *individual* practice, findings here (Chapter 3) show that subjectivity formation unfolds in distinctly *social* (collective) processes (see also Knights and McCabe 2003): self-formation derives parts of both its bind and its attractiveness when reinforced in social processes.

The findings of several chapters (e.g., Chapters 2–4 and 6) highlight the need to study subject and subjectivity formation in specific organizational contexts, and in doing so, to pay attention to both material and relational resources available and how available resources (or lack thereof) impact the social processes at play. Organizational as well as individual resources and restraints affect subjects' conduciveness to being 'moulded', which highlights the importance of studying subject and subjectivity formation as a situated interactional activity. As some of the chapters illustrate (see Chapters 4–6), studying subjectivity formation as situated activity reveals that governing attempts may produce strong emotions among the subjects targeted. Furthermore, feelings (e.g. fear or anxiousness) produce very different results (passivity, docility or more or less overt resistance) depending on how the subject acts on her own feelings.

This book has also explored new templates for desired subjectivity as part of contemporary trends in governing clients in street-level bureaucracies, as well as the accompanying interactional competence needed to implement them. The new approach to worker–client dialogues is a case in point and is presently at the heart of care and support work in relation to members of marginalized groups in society. The ideal at play here is client-centredness, which, from a governmentality perspective, entails seeing the very will of the client as the primary intervention site. While clients should ideally confess to having problems and/or inadequacies, for example, a substance use problem, they simultaneously need to express (trustworthy) signs of an inherent will to address that problem according to the institutional rationality (as shown in Chapter 5). The dilemma of employees is to govern clients in such a way that the clients appear to be acting on their own will. In this interactional work, employees apply subtle and therefore highly illusive means of

shaping client subjectivities. In contravention of the *ideal* of equality characterizing client-centred approaches, worker–client dialogues are, in fact, a highly powerful means of transforming subjectivities. Nevertheless, clients do resist depictions of themselves and social workers as aspiring to an (idealized) facilitator subjectivity, and at times, 'relapse' into applying more authoritarian means in their efforts to bring about change in client subjectivity. There are thus limits to the malleability of both clients and staff. By analysing real-life dialogues, we learn about both governing attempts *and* the ways in which and the extent to which clients are malleable.

A particular type of worker–client dialogue that is salient in professional mental health care and support work is advice giving and responses (including resistance) (see Chapter 6). By studying such dialogues, *situational processes* whereby the subject comes to observe herself, reflect on and interpret her own will and actions, and to recognize her own knowledge about herself, are revealed. This includes attempts made at strengthening the self-governance of clients in the institutionally preferred manner. In and through such dialogues and interactions, subject positions are created, accepted and resisted. We learned that clients occasionally accept advice and display the suggested way of strengthening their self-governance but also display resistance in several ways. For instance, resistance by asserting their *own* knowledge of norms, that is, their own competence and self-knowledge, may mean that clients agree with the suggested future course of action recommended in advice giving but disagree about *how* to get there. In instances of overt resistance, clients questioned the relevance of the recommendation and implicit norms of how to live life altogether. Hence, self-knowledgeable subjects are produced in situational processes of advice giving and resistance, but this does not necessarily result in change in subjectivities in institutionally preferred ways or according to the specific form of governmental rationality characterizing the setting.

Governing attempts at transforming problematized mentalities of clients—or for that matter, young people in a former industrial community where the 'industrial mentality' allegedly characterizing the community has been depicted as the problem—may have unintended consequences. Attempts at transforming problematized mentalities and subjectivities can result in a mere *reproduction* of subjectivities (as shown in Chapter 7). Rather than the intended transformation of youth subjectivities in the direction of broadening the horizons of future possibilities, youths unintentionally identified with the local staff, namely familiar leisure leaders. We hence conclude that the social context in which subjectification takes place matters, and furthermore, that subjectification is contingent on recognition, both on recognizing oneself in the templates and ideals conveyed and on being recognized by others in the social environment or setting (cf. Butler 2002). We have also seen that attempts at transforming subjectivities may be successful when both supported by and reproduced in wider discursive environments in society, such as making use of neurobiological diagnoses to enable youths to enter

the labour market by way of wage subsidies (see Chapter 7). Hence, outcomes of governing attempts cannot be inferred from the study of the government instruments *per se* but need to be complemented with studies on governing practices, including the subjects of governing and their concerns along with their social environment.

We have seen that successful governance simultaneously produces and relies on subjects who *voluntarily* subjugate to the will of the other, who wills the same as the other, and conducts herself accordingly (see Chapters 5, 6 and 8). However, in everyday life, human beings recurrently problematize; that is, they reflect on troubles, concerns and experiences as defined by themselves, as part of the process of (re)acting to governing attempts (see Chapter 8). In this book, the notion of problematization has been shown to be useful to account for the rationalities of not just the government programmes or technologies but also *of the subjects themselves* in relation to governing attempts. In addition, the concept of counter-conduct may help us to remain attentive to signs of refusal to let oneself be conducted according to the will of others.

For analytical purposes, it is important to separate governed subjects' talk about what is communicated to them on the one hand, and their talk about their own practices based on what has been communicated to them on the other (see Chapter 8). Subjects may come across as pleased with having received new and important knowledge, but this does not necessarily mean that they themselves *act* accordingly. Instead, subjects may have made informed choices *not* to follow the advice that they have been given and with which they discursively agree. Subjects may hence come across as highly malleable in discursively displaying agreement with governing rationalities but in reality, they draw on their own life experiences generated in quite different social contexts and characterized by a different set of conditions leading them in other directions. Reflexivity may thus work in many—including unintended— ways. We saw that life experiences of death and illness may make subjects question the unspoken assumption underlying many (perhaps most) governing attempts that it is somehow possible for life to *be made* predictable and to plan and enjoy accordingly, and that life can be governed to produce a brighter future (Chapter 2), stable labour market participation (Chapter 7), or financial stability (Chapter 8) throughout life. As stressed throughout this volume, the multiplicity of discourses and possible subject positions available offer reflexive subjects, a certain choice. Several chapters illustrate how, rather than remoulding themselves, individuals exposed to governmental interventions may remould the ideas and norms conveyed to them to fit their own preconceptions and 'preformatted' identities and subjectivities.

There are, however, contexts and social settings in which the free will of the subject is more heavily circumscribed because of the high stakes involved. In the social services, a client's custody of his/her children may (more or less explicitly) be conditional upon the conduct of the client (see Chapter 5). Human beings may come across as more malleable when the cost of *not* adjusting

and adapting is too high. Nevertheless, long-term change according to a specific form of governmental rationality—transformed subjectivities—(still) relies on subjects who, over time, come to will what the other wants. In state-sanctioned educational initiatives, immigrants need to attend obligatory courses to gain the economic support necessary to live (see Chapter 9). Employees, on the other hand, have escape routes; a high staff turnover rate can be interpreted as a sign of resistance, by the professionals, to governmental subjectivity interventions. The professionals who choose to stay found ways of resisting both the governance they were subjected to and the type of governance to which they were expected to subject the immigrants. We also saw that the governing of both employees and immigrant subjects may produce resignation and passivity. To some extent, resignation is a sign of malleability, even if the subject expresses no inherent *will* to agree with governing rationalities. This is one of the unintended consequences of governing attempts, namely the generation of docility rather than the sought-after self-sufficiency and activity.

A sociological structure–agency approach to the study of governmentality: towards a new research agenda

With this volume, we set out to provide theoretical inspiration for a detailed and nuanced study of both governing practices and the *agency* of those subjected to governing attempts. We have shown self- and subjectivity formation to be intersubjective phenomena, in turn conditioned by both individual and collective processes as well as by social settings, available resources and governing attempts.

As has been argued at length and richly illustrated in this book, the outcomes of governing attempts in terms of subjectivity formation cannot be inferred from the study of governing rationalities or technologies but must take into account the governing practices and lived experience of those subjected to governing attempts in concrete social settings. We hope that this effort will inspire a 'second generation' of governmentality studies that, based on ethnographic research, sets out to explore the complexities involved in subjectivity formation and adds further nuance to the malleability of human beings in contemporary times.

An essential assumption of governmentality scholars is that governing rationales and technologies *produce* subjects and subjectivities in the first place. However, simultaneously, governmentality scholars such as Rose (1999: 21) and Dean (2008: 11) claim that the outcomes of governing attempts on subjects and subjectivities are *unpredictable*. Taken together, these arguments might even seem paradoxical. We suggest that this conclusion may be a consequence of governmentality scholars' (conscious) avoidance of empirical studies of local efforts to, and the intersubjective practices involved in accomplishing governing in social contexts, as well as studies of how targeted subjects respond to governing attempts in these contexts. By

way of the sociological and (often) ethnographic studies of particular social contexts and situations presented in this book, exploring also the 'messy' outcomes of governing attempts and acknowledging individual and collective creativity in responding to such attempts, we question the claim that the outcomes of governing attempts are unpredictable. After having explored the 'messy' outcomes of governing attempts at transforming subjectivities in specific contemporary social contexts, we propose a distinctively sociological theoretical approach to the study of governmentality, the centre of which is a structure–agency dynamic shaping the outcome of governing attempts.

To achieve this, we found it useful to combine governmentality perspectives with ethnographies of institutional discourse to study adapting and resisting subjects and selves in concrete social settings. This made us attentive to how governing attempts are talked into practice, how talk is 'inextricably intertwined' with social settings (Miller 1994: 280), how dominant discourses in different contemporary social settings shape subjects, and also any signs of alternative discourse and counter-conduct. Institutional ethnography usefully stresses that the self emanates from the *interplay* between circumstantial demands (restraints and resources) and self-constituting actions. However, in this perspective, self and subjectivity tend to come across as almost circumstantially changeable; that is, they are forever mouldable situationally every day. This view risks underestimating the influence of structure in the shaping and transformation of subjectivities.

The cross-fertilization of the two traditions helped us take note of the structure–agency dynamic shaping the transformation of subjectivities. In this book, we have provided depth to previously mainly theoretical notions of the actively participating subjects, with agency, creativity and reflexive capacity to respond in partly unexpected ways. Nevertheless, while self and subjectivity are not static, and there are several available subject positions at any point in time, the subject's *agency* is at the very same time—at any point in time—*conditioned*. We saw that our selves are more adaptable to subject positions that correspond to our preconception and pre-existing sense of self, which highlights the fact that individuals throughout their lives are formed by many practices, contexts and life experiences, limiting the effects of intentional interventions in subjectivities.

We suggest that transforming subjectivities involves a structure–agency dynamic. Our sociological structure–agency dynamic complements existing theories of governmentality in that it adds dimensions and concepts to the theoretical understanding and empirical study of attempts at transforming subjectivities, including their outcomes. It furthermore illustrates that although the outcomes of governing attempts cannot be assumed or inferred theoretically, but must be studied empirically, outcomes are not unpredictable. Empirical studies of governing and agency as process have provided us with theoretical cues of both enabling and constraining conditions.

The structure–agency dynamic puts collective and individual agency in a dialectical relationship. Transforming subjectivities depends on collective and

individual agency. Governing attempts depend on collective agency, that is, the shared belief in and collective capability to organize and put into practice the conduct of conduct with the purpose of achieving transformed subjectivities. Subjects are both products and producers of social environments; they have an 'agentic capability' (Bandura 2020: 75) that enables them to shape their lives, although this capability is constrained or conditioned in that it is dependent on setting- and context-specific demands and constraints, and on the subject's degree of access to material as well as relational resources.

Governing attempts to transform subjectivities (rationalities, templates and collective agency) work only to the extent to which the individual subject wills what the others want, but also depend on resources available to subjects in their self-constituting processes; that is, the *conditionality* of their access to both material and relational resources. Simultaneously, processes of subjectivity transformation depend on circumstantial demands: what is at stake in the social context, the setting and situation in question, the subject's emotional responses and how she reflects and acts on her emotions; her self-constituting (re)actions.

Figure 10.1 summarizes the key dimensions of the structure–agency dynamic shaping the transformation of subjectivities. It illustrates the interplay between governing attempts and subjectivity formation in settings and social environments entailing both restraints and resources. In this way, we

Figure 10.1 The structure–agency dynamic shaping the transformation of subjectivities.

move from a (sole) focus on rationalities and technologies to one on governing practices involving just as much the subject, her experience, reflexivity, social environment and context. The interplay between the subject—her 'preformatted' self and (past) experience—and governing attempts forms her agency and in turn, the outcome.

We suggest a theoretical notion of this interplay as a dialectical *dynamic* between structures (governing rationalities, material and relational resources, collective action) and the subject's agency. We also suggest that the outcome of this structure–agency dynamic as it plays out over time is dependent on setting characteristics. Setting characteristics—such as circumstantial demands (resources, restraints and type of tasks), the conditionality of the subject's degree of access to material and relational resources (influencing her agency), the type of intersubjective practices of power, collective (and individual) agency and emotions—(in)form the agency of the subject, her self-constituting actions and hence the outcome of governing attempts. It is our hope that this book will inspire a 'second generation' of governmentality studies, along these lines.

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