Since May 1998 Scandinavian group researchers and social psychologists have met bi-annually for what has to be called the GRASP conference. GRASP originally stood for "Group as Paradox". The first four conferences were held in Linköping, Lund, Stockholm and Skövde respectively.

The fifth conference was organized at Linköping University May 11-12, 2006 under the auspices of the FOG FORUM group. Generous assistance was given by the Department of Behavioural Sciences and the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). This year’s theme was “Interaction on the Edge” and a special emphasis was put on inter group processes. Sixty researchers from Sweden and Denmark took part and listened to thirty presentations. Twelve of these have been accepted for this proceeding volume.
INTERACTION ON THE EDGE
Johan Näslund & Stefan Jern (Editors)

**Interaction on the Edge**

Proceedings from the 5th GRASP conference, Linköping University, May 2006
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INTERACTION ON THE EDGE.
GRASP 2006 at Linköping University

Kjell Granström

Ten years ago a small number of researchers within the field of group psychology were united in some sort of a research team. They were called FOG (Field research on Organizations and Groups) and most of the members were related to Linköping University. These researchers invited to the first conference in a series, which came to be called GRASP conferences (group and social psychology). The second conference was held in Lund, the third in Stockholm, the fourth in Skövde and the fifth is now back in Linköping.

The purpose of the conferences has been to offer a meeting place for group and social psychologists in the Nordic countries, but especially in Sweden. Group and social psychology is not yet a large scientific field in Scandinavia, although it is abroad. Therefore, it is important to offer a forum where doctoral students and senior researchers can write, read, meet, and discuss planned and ongoing projects.

The theme of the GRASP conference 2006 is “Interaction on the edge”. What does that mean?

• On the edge in sense of being in the front
• On the edge sense of being near breaking through
• On the edge sense of being near the collapse
• On the edge sense of living dangerous
• On the edge sense of being on the top

I am convinced that in some sense Nordic group and social psychology is on the edge. The choice is yours to decide which type of edge it is.

If we look at group and social psychology in a historical perspective, this field of research has been on the edge at several points of time. I will present a short cavalcade of research hits or scientific peaks in the history. That means research efforts on group and social psychology that have left marks of the researchers’ footsteps.

Examples on such footprints are, for instance, Le Bon’s ideas about crowd behaviour or Ringelmann’s findings concerning productivity (the so called Ringelmann effect). However, more composed and long-lasting tracks can be located at three time clusters in the last century.
The first one occurs in the 1930s, the second around the 1950s and the third one during 1960 to 1970. After that there are just a few footprints and history will show if they are long lasting.

The three periods or epochs with tracks left in the scientific history of group and social psychology are, according to my historical research, concentrated at the middle of the last century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

I prefer to call the three periods in the following way indicating that the scientific interest among group and social psychology researchers had three different common focuses.

1. The measurement breaking through
2. The conformity period
3. The social influence period

In order to prove this assumption, I will reel of a number of names of researchers and their innovations. And if you, as a social psychology researcher, do not recognize about half of them, then my idea has failed. So, let us have a try!

Table 1. The first period. The measurement breaking through

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Phenomena</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Allport</td>
<td>Attitudes to other groups. Submissiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Thurstone</td>
<td>Attitudes can be measured. Thurstone-scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Zorbaugh et al.</td>
<td>Observations of authentic groups, gangs, crowds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Hartshorne</td>
<td>Measurements of moral character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Guilford &amp; Braly</td>
<td>Intro-version, extroversion scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Cowley</td>
<td>Leadership traits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Moreno</td>
<td>Sociometric method, sociodrama.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Likert</td>
<td>Attitude scale, Likert-scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Parten</td>
<td>Structured observation of human interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>Studies of human relations. Western Electric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Bennington</td>
<td>Correlation studies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a few years around the 1930s a lot of research strategies, that we still use, were introduced. Certainly, they have been developed since then, but the basic
assumptions are the same concerning data collection and data treatment. These early social psychologists gave us a solid ground to start from.

The next period started at the end of the second War and concerned conformity. That is not a coincidence. The whole world had been frightened of what blind obedience and conformity may result in. Thus, the interest in destructive human behaviour was obvious.

Table 2. The conformity period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Phenomena</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Lewin</td>
<td>Action research (Lippit and White)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Lewin</td>
<td>Behavioural formula $B = f(I, E)$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Deutsch</td>
<td>Group cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Festinger</td>
<td>Attitude change, dissonance theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Bales</td>
<td>Interaction process analysis (group pressure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Schachter</td>
<td>Communication and cohesiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Asch</td>
<td>Studies on conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Analysis of power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above list is just a sample of research around the 1950s. The interest focused on conformity. Why does an individual, in some situations, conform and even behave in opposition to basic human values? We are still concerned about that question.

In the third period there was a focus on interaction processes and the problem of what makes people change attitudes, behaviour and marital partners. In what way can knowledge about social influence be used in political or commercial purposes? The applications of the research findings were not a question for the researchers. However, whether they did care or not, their findings became applied to a lot of social situations. Here is the list.
Table 3. The social influence period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Phenomena</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Milgram</td>
<td>Obedience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Newcomb</td>
<td>Interpersonal attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Shaw</td>
<td>Communication network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Bion</td>
<td>Basic assumption theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Fiedler</td>
<td>Contingency model of leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Latané</td>
<td>Social comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Biddle &amp; Thomas</td>
<td>Roles and norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Davis</td>
<td>Productivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Steiner</td>
<td>Group task and group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Janis</td>
<td>Groupthink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Hackman</td>
<td>Group performance effectiveness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again there is a sample of names (maybe more focussed on groups than on social psychology this time). However the zeitgeist is obvious. The main interest during this period is on peoples’ interaction with each other. The heritage from this period may be obedience, communication networks, contingency theory, groupthink and negotiations. We are still mocking with such items.

Then, which are the new items on the agenda? What will the content of the fourth period be? I think we can call the fourth period: Interaction on the edge. Maybe you will find that some of the below subjects will result in historical footprints:

Table 4. Interaction on the edge in the future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Phenomena</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-organization in groups</td>
<td>Distress and bystanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences of group work</td>
<td>Decisions in social dilemmas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group composition</td>
<td>Eyewitness responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation strategies</td>
<td>Integrating distributive justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity in computer games</td>
<td>Action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-professional teams</td>
<td>Multi-professional teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role exit</td>
<td>Inter-disciplinary teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group supervision</td>
<td>Corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy in groups</td>
<td>Gender and leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship-based learning</td>
<td>Herding and market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethno-cultural empathy</td>
<td>Identity theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sexuality</td>
<td>Riot research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social values and justice</td>
<td>Shame and guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making during stress</td>
<td>A justice world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual puri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As you probably have disclosed, the above subjects are the titles of the presentations in the GRASP conference, 2006.

What will be the next epoch concerning social psychology? Maybe some answers can be found in the presentations of this conference. Certainly, most of the presenters have, in some way, their roots in the past. Hopefully, the conference may leave footprints for the future. In this proceeding a number of the presentations are published. (Thus, in the sense of printing ink, at least some of the participants have got an opportunity to leave marks for the future.)
People are frequently imitating others, for instance, in electing politicians or in purchasing consumer goods. This phenomenon has been recognized in financial markets referred to as herding (for a review, see Hirshleifer & Teoh, 2003). If a large number of investors follow each other and make similar irrational decisions, it is a possible cause of market booms and bursts. For this reason, the popular press often holds investors’ tendency to herd as responsible. However, research points in opposing directions; while some studies confirm the existence of herding in financial markets (see, e.g., Guedj & Bouchaud, 2005), others do not (see, e.g., Drehmann, Oechssler, & Roider, 2005).

When investors are taking the same action it may be a result of herding, that is, a direct influence from information about one or several other investors’ decisions. However, it may also be a result of “clustering of actions” as a consequence of indirect influences (Sias, 2004; Drehmann et al., 2005), including common knowledge (Grinblatt, Titman, & Wermers, 1995), fads (Sias, 2004), and common investment styles (Wermers, 2000). An important challenge to empirical studies is to distinguish between herding and clustering of actions. Since in actual markets the bases for investors’ decision making are seldom disclosed, it becomes difficult to identify the true sources of information influencing trades. An experimental approach is required to identify causes of herding.

Anderson and Holt (1997), Anderson (2001), and Celen and Kariv (2004) report experiments in which participants received the same private information and made choices sequentially knowing about the choices made by those preceding them. After a certain number of participants have made their choices, those following them tend to disregard their private information. This demonstrates that imitating others may occur among investors. Theoretically, this form of herding is referred to as informational cascades when observation of others’ choices provides valid information, thus it is optimal for the individual to follow the others without regard to the private information (Bikhchandani, Hirshleifer, & Welch, 1992). Once an informational cascade has started, however, other information made public is likely to be ignored, which may still cause inoptimality at the macro level (Drehmann, Oechssler, & Roider, 2005). For a general discussion of herding and informational cascades, see Smith and Sorensen (2000).
In social psychological research the issue of whether or not it is beneficial to follow others has also been raised. For instance, in Festinger’s (1954) theory of social comparison processes, it is assumed that when one disagrees with a number of apparently unrelated sources that are in agreement, and there is no other plausible explanation for their agreement, it is sensible to infer that the others are correct. A number of factors are however known to affect this inference (see Bond & Smith, 1996, for a review). One such factor that may affect reliance on others is task difficulty. In general a greater task difficulty elicits more conformity. Yet, people conform to a majority even in simple perceptual tasks, such as in the experiments by Asch (1952, 1956). The number of individuals in the majority is however important. An increase from one to three increases conformity but increases beyond this have little additional effect (Hodges & Geyer, 2006). Research (Wood, Lundgren, Ouellette, Busceme, & Blackstone, 1994) has also shown that a consistent minority of two is more influential than either a consistent individual or an inconsistent minority. However, when participants are motivated to be accurate, they tend to rely on a consensus heuristic and thus the influence of the majority increases.

It has been assumed that two processes are mediating influences from others, comparisons with others and validation of these comparisons (Wood et al., 1994). According to Mugny and Perez (1991) comparisons involve identification with the source and results in influences without deliberation, whereas validation assesses the source’s arguments and results in influences after deliberation. Comparison and validation are assumed to underlie both majority and minority influences. An opposite position is maintained in Moscovici’s (1985) dual-process model of conformity and conversion, according to which people comply with the majority without thoroughly reflecting on its message because they wish to belong to the majority group (conformity). Since people are unwilling to be identified with deviant groups, minorities are in contrast incapable of eliciting a comparison process. However, depending on its size and consistency, a minority may trigger a validation process leading to that the minority’s arguments are considered in detail. This may result in a privately changed opinion (conversion) even though the majority's opinion is still officially proclaimed. Under certain circumstances the change in opinion would also result in public adoption of the minority’s opinion.

Maass and Clark (1983) connected the comparison and validation processes to non-systematic and systematic message processing, respectively. In non-systematic processing, influences are triggered by some cue in the environment (signaling, e.g., status or size of the source) or are the result of the use of a consensus heuristic (i.e., “the majority is always right”). Systematic processing entails careful evaluation of arguments and interrelated information.

In the difficult task that financial investments constitute, following a majority or herding is a heuristic that investors to some extent are likely to use. We aim at showing this in simulations of a financial market where the use of this heuristic
would lead to worse performance relative to relying on private information. From the review of previous research it is however clear that a minority under certain conditions would influence a majority.

In a review of the effects of rewarding performance in experiments, Camerer and Hogarth (1999) concluded that these effects are varied and complex. The presence and level of financial incentives seem to affect performance in judgment tasks, in particular where increased effort would improve performance. In a financial market such as that simulated in the present experiments, it is beneficial to closely examine the outcomes. This represents a task where rewards are likely to have a positive effect. Rewarding individual performance would therefore possibly counteract reliance on invalid information about other investors’ choices. A parallel can here be drawn to the validation process or systematic processing of information postulated to counteract conformity (Martin, Martin, Smith, & Hewstone, 2006). Rewarding group performance may however enhance herding because it reinforces the comparison process or non-systematic processing, thus leading to conformity as well as worse performance. Whether this would apply only to a majority and not to a minority is an open question. The answer depends on whether the tendency to compare oneself to a majority is stronger than the effect of rewards for following the minority.

**Overview of Method**

In order to experimentally investigate herding in financial markets, we use a sequential individual decision making task similar to that devised by Massey and Wu (2004, 2005) in which participants make binary predictions of a future “upmarket” or “downmarket.” This task is an essential component of actual financial investments. A monetary payoff is obtained depending on the number of correct predictions of the market state. On each trial a “private signal” is presented consisting of a number randomly sampled from either an upmarket or downmarket distribution. Given that participants infer the correct market state, consistently predicting an upmarket or downmarket would lead to an average of 80% correct. The expected value is the sum across trials of the probability of being correct times the payoff obtained for being correct on each trial.

In “herd” conditions information is given about the predictions made by three other fictitious participants. These predictions are randomly generated resulting in an average of 50% correct. Before making a prediction the participants are first presented the private signal (also ostensibly available to the other participants), then they are presented information about the other participants’ predictions of an upmarket or downmarket (referred to as the “herd”). In addition to the individual payoff for making correct predictions, monetary payoffs are also obtained for either being correct when the majority (two other participants) or the minority (one other participant) make correct predictions. This is referred to as a “majority bonus” or “minority bonus.” Always following
the herd (majority or minority) would lead to an average of 50% correct. The expected value is the sum across trials of the probability of the herd being correct times the majority bonus or minority bonus in addition to the probability of obtaining an individual payoff (in on average 40% of the trials) times the individual payoff. This expected value is always lower than the expected value of following the private signal.

**Experiment 1**

Experiment 1 investigates the level of herding when only individual performance is rewarded. Participants are randomly assigned to an individual condition or a herd condition. The difference between these conditions is that participants in the individual condition only receive the private signal, while participants in the herd condition both receive the private signal and information about the predictions made by three fictive participants.

**Method**

**Participants.** Sixty undergraduates from Göteborg University (44 women and 16 men) participated in the experiment in return for payments of 50 SEK (1 SEK was approximately equal to 0.125 US$ at the time of the study). Participants would in addition to this receive a bonus from 0 to 100 SEK depending on performance. The mean age of the participants was 26.0 years ($SD = 7.1$). They were randomly assigned to two equally large groups, the individual condition and the herd condition.

**Procedure.** Participants arrived at the laboratory and were seated in separate cubicles with computers. All instructions and material were computerized.

The experiment consisted of 25 trials. Beginning with the first trial the participants’ task was to predict whether on the next trial there would be an “upmarket” or “downmarket.”. The task was self-paced. Responses were made by using the mouse to move the cursor to an indicated position. Before each trial a “private signal” consisting of a number from 5 to 16 was presented on the screen. The presented number was on each trial randomly sampled from either the upmarket or downmarket distribution of numbers shown in Figure 1. The mean of the upmarket distribution is 12, and the mean of the downmarket distribution is 9. If the sampled number exceeds 10 the probability is 0.80 that it is sampled from the upmarket and 0.20 that it is sampled from the downmarket; if the number is 10 or less the probability is 0.80 that is sampled from the downmarket and 0.20 that it is sampled from the upmarket. Five random binary sequences of private signals were used equally often in each condition. Consistent predictions of upmarket or downmarket would lead to 19, 24, 17, 18, or 21 correct answers for these random sequences.

For two thirds of the participants in each condition the random sequences were reverse-coded from trial 16, implying a market transition. For one third there was a transition from upmarket to downmarket on this trial, and for another one third there was a transition from downmarket to upmarket. For the
remaining one third there was no market transition, instead there was a
consistent upmarket in half of the cases and a consistent downmarket in half of
the cases.

The participants were informed that an upmarket was equally likely to occur
as a downmarket, that there would be maximally one transition from upmarket
to downmarket or the reverse, and that there would be no such transition before
the sixth trial. They were further informed that the number representing the
private signal was sampled from one of two overlapping distributions of
numbers shown to them (like Figure 1) both as part of the instructions and on
each trial.

In the individual condition participants made their predictions solely based
on the private signal. In the herd condition, the participants were told that three
other participants were simultaneously taking part in the experiment seated in
adjacent rooms. The participants in this condition were further told that after
receiving the same sampled number, all four participants had to make their
predictions in a randomly determined order, and that they were always the last in
this order. Therefore, they would be informed about the three others’ predictions
after seeing the private signal, without others would know their predictions.
After the private signal appeared on the screen each other participants’
prediction of an upmarket or downmarket was in turn shown. When the private
signal and the predictions were displayed, the participants made their
predictions. The sequence of the three fictive participants’ predictions was
obtained by unrestricted random sampling assuring that they were not
correlated. Five such random sequences were used equally often across
participants. Consistently following the majority (two in the herd) would lead to
13, 11, 13, 12, or 11 correct answers.

In both the individual condition and the herd condition, participants earned 4
SEK for each correct prediction. After finishing the experiment, the participants
were debriefed and paid for their participation in accordance with their
performance.

Results

The percentage of correct prediction and percentage of following the private
signal were computed for five blocks each consisting of five trials (see Table 1).

Since the first block represent a learning phase before which participants
were informed that there would be no market transition, the predictions in the
first block were excluded from the following analyses. Tables 2 and 3 show the
results of parallel 2 (condition: individual vs. herd) by 4 (market transition: up-
to-down vs. down-to-up vs. always up vs. always down) analyses of variance
(ANOVAs), with block as a repeated-measures factor, performed on percentage
of correct prediction and percentage of following the private signal. In both
ANOVAs the main effects of condition were significant at the significance level
of $p=.05$. Participants in the herd condition made significantly more correct
predictions \( (M=68.3\% \text{ vs. } M=57.6\%) \) and followed the private signal significantly more frequently \( (M=78.3\% \text{ vs. } M=65.4\%) \).

A trend analysis showed that the significant effect of block on percentage of correct prediction was associated with a significant linear trend, \( t(82) = 2.86, p=.006 \), substantiating that participants’ performance improved over trials, as well as a significant cubic trend, \( t(82) = 3.91, p<.001 \), due to worse performance in the third block.

**Discussion**

The results of Experiment 1 were not as expected. If participants in the herd condition had followed the herd, they should have been less accurate in predicting the correct market state than participants in the individual condition. On the contrary, they performed significantly better. Furthermore, they also followed the private signal more frequently.

It should first be noted that rewarding individual performance counteracted reliance on invalid information about others’ choices. Thus, herding was not observed. As expected, rewards may thus play important roles for herding.

An explanation of the improved performance in the herd condition is also called for. A possibility is that participants in this condition became more competitive, possibly being motivated to outperform the herd. Given that the performance in the individual condition only marginally exceeded the chance level, the monetary reward for accurate individual performance might not have been sufficient. The additional competitiveness induced by others was therefore necessary.

The results also showed that accuracy of performance increased over blocks of trials except for a decrease in the third block. After a number of trials participants probably started to anticipate a market transition, and for this reason, varied their predictions. After the third block a transition had taken place for two thirds of the participants. If they believed that the transition had occurred, no reason would remain for them in the last block to vary their predictions, which therefore would be very accurate. However, preventing a maximal accuracy, this would not apply to the remaining one third of participants who did not encounter any transition.

In summary, Experiment 1 did not reveal any effect of herding that would impair performance. On the contrary, the presence of others might have made participants motivated to outperform them, to attend more closely to the private signal, and therefore to perform more accurately. Experiment 2 investigates whether participants will herd if they are financially rewarded for doing so. An effect of economic incentives may in this case reinforce the use of a consensus heuristic, thus leading to worse performance. Whether the herd is a majority or minority may also have an effect. A consensus heuristic would probably only lead to herding when the others are a majority, thus rewards for following a minority would fail to affect performance.
Experiment 2

Experiment 2 examines whether financial incentives for making the same predictions as the majority or the minority would lead to herding. A majority-bonus and a minority-bonus herd condition are compared to the herd condition in Experiment 1 (referred to as the no-bonus condition). The individual condition was not considered an appropriate control given the observed worse performance in this condition.

Method

Participants. Another 60 undergraduates from Göteborg University (37 women and 23 men) participated in the experiment in return for payments from 50 to 150 SEK depending on performance. Their mean age was 26.9 years ($SD = 9.9$). Participants were randomly assigned to two equally large groups, a majority-bonus herd condition and a minority-bonus herd condition.

Procedure. The procedure was essentially the same as in the herd condition of Experiment 1 with the following exceptions. For each correct prediction participants earned 2 SEK. This reduction was made in order to equate the expected value for following the private signal with the expected value in the no-bonus condition. If a correct prediction coincided with the predictions made by the majority (two of the others), the participants in the majority-bonus condition received an additional 4 SEK. Participants in the minority condition received an additional 4 SEK if a correct prediction coincided with the predictions by the minority (one of the others).

After having completed the experiment participants were asked to answer questions displayed on the computer screen. The results of seven out of 12 asked questions are analyzed below (see Table 10). Answers were reported on a 9-point rating scale ranging from never (1) to always (9). Perceived influence was measured by four questions, one asking the participants to rate the degree of perceived influence from the others, one asking about the perceived independence of the participant’s responses in relation to the others’ responses, and two questions tapping the importance of similarity between the participants’ and the others’ responses. Perceived correctness was captured by three questions, in which participants rated the perceived correctness of the others’ responses as well as the perceived correctness of their own responses in relation to the others’ responses, respectively. Finally, participants were debriefed and paid for participation.

Results

Performance. Three dependent variables were computed for each individual and block. First, the percentage of correct predictions was calculated. Second, the percentage of following the private signal was calculated by summarizing the number of times the participants’ predictions followed the signal (>10) subtracted by the number of times the predictions followed the herd (the same prediction as two or three of the other participants) but not the signal, divided by the total number of trials and multiplied by 100. Third, the percentage of
following the herd was calculated by summarizing the number of times the participants’ predictions followed the herd subtracted by the number of times the predictions followed the signal but not the herd, divided by the total number of trials and multiplied by 100.

In the following analyses the results for the herd condition in Experiment 1, the no-bonus condition, will be included. The mean percentages across blocks are given in Table 4. Tables 5, 6, and 7 show the results of parallel 3 (condition: no-bonus vs. majority-bonus vs. minority-bonus) by 4 (market transition: up-to-down vs. down-to-up vs. always up vs. always down) analyses of variance (ANOVAs), including blocks 2 to 5 as a repeated-measures factor, performed on the percentage of correct prediction, percentage of following the private signal, and percentage of following the herd. In all these ANOVAs the main effects of condition did not reach the conventional level of significance (p=.05). Still, participants in the no-bonus and minority-bonus conditions made more frequently correct predictions compared to the participants in the majority-bonus condition (M=68.2% vs. M=70.5% vs. M=59.3%), and followed the private signal more frequently (M=63.9% vs. M=68.6% vs. M=50.5%). Conversely, the participants in the majority-bonus condition followed the herd more often than participants in no-bonus condition (M=26.5% vs. M=21.4%) who followed the herd more frequently than participant in the minority-bonus condition (M=9.1%).

A trend analysis showed that the significant effect of block on percentage of correct predictions was associated with a significant cubic trend, t(78) = 2.51, p<.014, due to a performance decline in the third block.

Post-Experimental Questionnaire Responses. Table 8 displays means and SDs and correlations between questions computed across all participants in the herd conditions. After recoding reversed questions, a principal component analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation was performed (KMO = .704; Bartlett’s test, approximate χ² =244.88, p<.001). A 2-factor solution suggested by the Kaiser-criterion explained 69.5 % of the variance. All questions had communalities above .50 and a loading of .67 or higher on one factor and no high cross-loadings were found (Table 9). Questions measuring perceived influence loaded on one factor, questions measuring perceived correctness loaded on the other factor. An additional PCA on the four questions loaded on the perceived influence factor explained 71.3 % of the variance. An index formed by averaging across these items had a Cronbach’s α=.86. Another PCA performed on the three questions associated with the perceived correctness factor explained 68.2 % of the variance. The index formed by averaging had a Cronbach’s α=.76.

The results of separate one-way ANOVAs performed on the indexes are reported in Tables 10 and 11. A larger perceived influence was observed in the majority-bonus and minority-bonus conditions (M = 4.1, M = 4.1) compared to the no-bonus condition (M = 3.1), although this difference did not reach
significance. When the questions were analysed separately, a significant difference was obtained for question #10 (“Was it important for you that your predictions coincided with the others’ predictions?”). It was more important that the participants’ predictions coincided with the others’ predictions in the majority-bonus condition compared to the minority-bonus condition and the no-bonus condition ($M=4.0$ vs. $M=2.8$ vs. $M=2.5$), $F(2, 87) = 3.52$, $p = .035$. On the index of perceived correctness, there were non-significance differences between the majority-bonus condition, the minority-bonus condition, and the no-bonus condition ($M=4.4$ vs. $M=3.9$ vs. $M=3.7$). A significant difference was obtained for question #9 (“Do you think that the others had a more correct view of the market state than yourself?”); in the majority-bonus condition participants believed others were more correct than in the minority-bonus condition and the no-bonus condition ($M=4.7$ vs. $M=3.6$ vs. $M=3.5$), $F(2, 87) = 3.91$, $p < .024$.

**Discussion**

The bonus obtained by participants for making the same predictions as the majority led to more irrational herding than in the condition with no bonus, that is, a more frequent following of the majority, a less frequent following of the valid private signal, and therefore a lower percentage of correct predictions. However, no effects were observed in the minority-bonus condition. The questionnaire results furthermore suggested that participants in the majority-bonus condition were aware of the influence of the others believing that the others were more correct than themselves. The changes in accuracy of performance across blocks replicated those observed in Experiment 1 and may be accounted for in the same way.

A possible explanation of the asymmetry in the effects of rewarding a majority or minority may be that the tendency to conform overrides validation or systematic processing when the herd is a majority whereas the reverse would be true when the herd is a minority (Moscovici, 1985). Since systematic processing in the minority-bonus condition was likely to reveal that the minority (as well as the majority) made inaccurate predictions, this would lead to as high a reliance on the private signal as in the no-bonus condition in which rewards were obtained only for making correct predictions.

The facts that participants in the majority-bonus condition seemed to be aware of the influence of the others, and believed that they were more accurate, suggest that they made a conscious decision to use a consensus heuristic. Additional research is needed to illuminate whether this is a valid conclusion as well as to understand why a consensus heuristic is chosen.

**General Discussion**

Herding has been referred to as mindless behavior in financial markets (Shiller, 2000). However, this is not supported by the results of the present experiments. First, it was shown in the experiments set up to simulate financial investments that financial incentives are required for herding to occur. Thus,
some reasoned process needs to be posited. Second, a more adequate explanation of this process is probably to be found in Moscovici’s (1985) dual-process model of conformity and conversion. Following the herd when it is a majority is a strong motive, possibly sufficiently strong to prevent systematic processing of negative information. However, when the herd is a minority, or a majority that it is less desirable to belong to (e.g., signaling low status), systematic processing is elicited leading to critical assessments of the predictions made by the minority or majority. The present experiments designed to show that herding lead to worse performance was obviously suitable to elucidate such effects of critical assessments.

An unexpected finding was that when only individual performance was rewarded, herding increased attention to the private signal and resulted in better performance. In showing that herding may lead to both better and worse performance, the present results represent an extension of previous findings (e.g., Guedj & Bouchaud, 2005; Drehmann et al., 2005). Increased motivation caused by the induced competition when performance is individually rewarded is a plausible explanation. Competition may be further enhanced if a fixed reward is distributed to the participants proportional to their performance. A necessary condition is however that desires to conform to the majority is not elicited.

Although the present results appear to paint a consistent picture, there are many gaps in need of being filled in. First, inferences of mediating processes rely largely on responses to a post-experimental questionnaire and must be tested in additional controlled experiments. In such experiments the difficulty of the investment task may be varied to facilitate or impede critical assessments. Second, other factors moderating conformity should be tested, in particular conformity to a minority of others. Accuracy and consistency of the herd predictions are factors that may have effects on conformity.

A limitation of the present results is the possibility to generalize to actual financial markets. To test the invariance of the present findings across different investment tasks in laboratory experiments is one avenue to investigating their generality. Cross-validation research comparing results of experiments to analyses of investments in actual markets is eventually needed.

References


Author Note

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Table 1

*Percentage of Correct Prediction and Percentage of Following Private Signal Related to Individual vs. Herd Condition in Blocks 1-5 (Experiment 1)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Correct prediction</th>
<th>Following private signal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Herd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 1</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 2</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 3</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 4</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2  
*Three-Way Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance of Percentage of Correct Prediction in Blocks 2 – 5 (Experiment 1)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>partial $\omega^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual vs. herd condition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market transition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual vs. herd condition x</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>market transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x individual vs. herd condition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.100*</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x market transition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>.486*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x individual vs. herd condition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>.722*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x market transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values in parentheses are mean-square errors.  
*After correction with Greenhouse-Geisser $\varepsilon=.72$.  

### Table 3

*Three-Way Repeated Measures Analysis of variance of Percentage of Following Private Signal in Blocks 2 – 5 (Experiment 1)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>partial ω²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual vs. herd condition</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market transition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual vs. herd condition x market transition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.247*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x individual vs. herd condition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>.257*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x market transition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>.947*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x individual vs. herd condition x Market transition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>.723*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>(0.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values in parentheses are mean-square errors.

* After correction with Greenhouse-Geisser $\varepsilon=.72$.  

---

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Table 4
Percentage of Correct Prediction, Percentage of Following Private Signal, and Percentage of Following Herd Related to Condition in Blocks 1-5 (Experiment 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Correct prediction</th>
<th>Follow Private Signal</th>
<th>Follow Herd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Majority</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>Individual Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 1</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 2</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 3</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 4</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block 5</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5
*Three-Way Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance of Percentage of Correct Prediction in Blocks 2 – 5 (Experiment 2)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>partial $\omega^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market transition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus x market transition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.460</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>(0.126)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>&lt;.001*</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x bonus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.260*</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x market transition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>.585*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x bonus x market transition</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.575*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values in parentheses are mean-square errors.
*After correction with Greenhouse-Geisser $\varepsilon=.722$. 
Table 6
*Three-Way Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance of Percentage of Following Private Signal in Blocks 2 – 5 (Experiment 2)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>partial $\omega^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.070</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market transition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>.856</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus x market transition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>(0.343)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.089*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x bonus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.279*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x market transition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>.832*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x bonus x market transition</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>.736*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values in parentheses are mean-square errors.
*After correction with Greenhouse-Geisser $\varepsilon=.722$. 
Table 7  
*Three-Way Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance of Percentage of Following Herd in Block 2 – 5 (Experiment 2)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>partial $\omega^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market transition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>.917</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus x market transition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>(0.339)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>.952*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x bonus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>.743*</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x market transition</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block x bonus x market transition</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>(0.18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Values in parentheses are mean-square errors.  
*After correction with Greenhouse-Geisser $\epsilon=.722$.  

Table 8  
*Means and SDs and Product Moment Correlations Between Answers to Post-Experimental Questionnaire*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>#3</th>
<th>#4</th>
<th>#5</th>
<th>#6</th>
<th>#9</th>
<th>#10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#2. Were the others’ predictions correct?</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3. Were the others’ predictions more correct than your predictions?</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.71**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4. Did you make your predictions independently of the others?</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td></td>
<td>.76**</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5. Were you influenced by the others’ predictions?</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6. Was it important for you to do the same as the others?</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>.67**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9. Did the others have a more correct view of the market state than you?</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10. Was it important that your predictions coincided with the others’ predictions?</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Responses were obtained on nine-point rating scales.  
*p<.05  
**p<.01
Table 9  
*Varimax Rotated Loadings from Principal Component Analysis of Answers to Post-Experimental Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>h²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#2. Do you think the others’ predictions were correct?</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.672</td>
<td>.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3. Were the others’ predictions more correct than your predictions?</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4. Did you make your predictions independently of the others?</td>
<td>.825</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5. Were you influenced by the others’ predictions?</td>
<td>.914</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6. Was it important for you to do the same as the others?</td>
<td>.868</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9. Did the others have a more correct view of the market state than you?</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10. Was it important that your predictions coincided with the others’ predictions?</td>
<td>.740</td>
<td>.260</td>
<td>.615</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variance before rotation  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>h²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>variance</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>69.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10

*One-Way Analysis of Variance on Index of Perceived Influence Constructed from Post-Experimental Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>partial $\omega^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.703</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>(3.723)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Value in parentheses is mean-square error.
Table 11
*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Index of Perceived Correctness Constructed from Post-Experimental Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>partial $\omega^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.885</td>
<td>.158</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>(1.712)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Value in parentheses is mean-square error.
Figure 1. Upmarket and downmarket distributions of the numbers representing the private signal.
IDENTITY AND COMPUTER GAMES; A CONCEPTUAL INVENTORY

Lars Erik Berg

1. Objective; Identity and computer gaming as social problem – and as intellectual.

Reports of computer gaming as a problematic phenomenon have become common. It is easy to imagine gaming as a field for children and teenagers with weak basis in ordinary everyday life indulging in fantasy activities. One boy takes his computer and moves to a friend, when his mother lays restrictions on the time in front of the screen. Another boy is taken to compulsory nursing for his gaming ”addiction”. (Concerning the amount of time spent in front of the screen gaming, reports give surprising figures up to 12-14 hours a day, [Turkle 1995, Metro and Rapport 06-11-29].)

These examples indicate private psycho-social problems; when they get numerous, they grow into ”social problems”.

The intellectual objective with this paper is twofold:

1) to understand the strong fascination of computer gaming by trying its relation to the concept of identity: Why do some people devote large amounts of their lifetime to placing virtual figures on a screen in a game that is not there in reality, that is, in a virtual happening. What characteristics of ”virtual reality” influence young people to build a world of fantasy characters for themselves.

2) to begin developing a differentiation of the latter concept and to relate this differentiated concept to aspects of gaming: What is the relation of ”real identity” to ”virtual identity”?

2. Identity as social construction, virtual and real

The concept of identity is not unequivocal. In my use it presupposes the capacity to perceive oneself as an object. Human beings are objects to themselves as subjects. (My use depends heavily on the treatment in G. H. Meads theory (1934/1969) of human (self) consciousness. I have developed my conception in Swedish in several works (e.g. Berg 1992/1996/2000) and also in brief form in English (Berg 1999.) This process is not inborn, but the consequence of the introduction of language in the collective life of our species. Without language, there is no possibility of consciousness of Self, because the Self, being a reflexive process, needs some sort of mirror to receive responses from others to the subject’s gestures. Original gesture is emitted, received by and responded to by Other, and the response received in turn by the first subject. Language transforms this elementary process to a conscious level by giving human subjects access to each other’s reaction to each other.
When the possibility for consciousness of Self is born, there is also born a possibility for development of Identity. This is what you see when you “turn around” and look at yourself (from the Other’s standpoint). Identity has many aspects. Two of them are: personal/individual and social identity. Now, in line with the above argument, both of these need sociality. Social identity refers to the other people and groups to which I belong. Personal identity refers to the “inner”, privately experienced identity, but this still needs the response from “significant others” in order to develop. So, all experience of identity has a social origin in reflection processes between human beings. This gives a special character to the analysis of the impact of computer gaming on identity. I hypothesize that this gives a good basis for explaining the deep effects that were indicated in the introduction above.

This conception of identity does not deny the possibility of individual biological differences between individuals. What is maintained is that when it comes to the individual’s experience of any aspects of identity, then s/he is dependent on the reflecting responses from others; having physical/biological differentiating traits is one thing, consciously integrating these in a “Self” is quite another. The very stuff from which personal identity is built, is presented by others, in reflected form. In the first place I react to Other’s responses to me, not to myself.

This introduces the problem of identity construction as a virtual event from scratch, in the specific sense that it builds on reflections. Or: in the real interaction of persons with identities, we find a high degree of virtuality. Or: In regard to identity, virtuality is part of reality and thus can not be separated from the latter. Or: Virtuality can not be extracted from reality.

The concept of “personal” or “individual identity” is misleading. In ordinary modern language it refers to the inner or private domains of the psychic life of human beings. It is used to indicate the border between two individuals. But originally the concept refers to the permeable relation between human beings: “persona” is the term for the mask that actors in the antique greek drama carried in order for the spectators to see which basic character the actor was illustrating (e.g. tragic, comic, angry, sad etc.). The point with the actor’s “persona” was to indicate his character for others, not for himself. The persona concept has been historically transformed from social to individual sense (Asplund 1983, chapter 3).

Computer game language has – correctly – adopted the ancient classic use of the concept of “persona”. The persona in the games is exactly the character that is seen by the other players (Turkle 1995, several places). In this, the concept points to the meeting as much as to the people who meet each other. It carries Erving Goffmans’ spirit.

Evidently, the presentation of an identity on the screen rather than “The presentation of Self in everyday life” sets the scene with other conditions of fantasy and deception than we have been used to. The scenario is like a
postmodern realization of many of Goffman’s concepts, e.g. the cynical versus the honest role player, role distance, working consensus, team (in social on-line-games), impression management, front – backstage (Goffman 1959/1974, 1963, 1971)

In Turkle’s book there appears also another trait in the persona concept, that proves productive from an interactionistic point of view. A human individual can be one person in everyday reality and quite another one on the screen. And this individual can also choose to be several personas in different “worlds” on the screen, or several actors on different scenes, as Goffman (1959/1974) would have it.

So the concept of individual gets old fashioned and irrelevant, in the world of screen presentation of self. The only indivisible entity there is the physical body. Perhaps we should be wise substituting the concept of individual to the concept of person(a). The only social about “individual” is that it connotes one of the two poles in a relation. “Persona” on the other hand, points to both poles by pointing to the meeting for these two individuals. Goffman says that he doesn’t want to study people and their moments, but moments and their people. Translated to the screen world: The screen itself, and what happens there, grows more important to study than the people who come to the meeting on the screen.

Adopting an interactionist perspective self identity can not emerge in one person without the Other as co-actor. Seen from this angle, we are all virtual products of the screen. This may be a tough position to embrace. But take a standard situation of the psychoanalytic object relations school type: Anne, 1 year old, has no knowledge of herself as being “Anne”, or that she is a “sweetheart”. This identity emerges only late, as a sophisticated result of a reflection of the complex stimuli in the “conversation of gestures” processed between herself and her parents, nursing her, and it emerges only by the social miracle that Mead calls “taking the role of the other”, i.e. calling out in Other a similar response that you call out in yourself (Mead 1969, several places in Introduction and part I, also in Berg 1992, chapter 3).

In sum: considering the very special concept (and phenomenon) of self identity, this can never be isolated from virtuality for the reason that a person’s identity can never be perceived by the person himself, only by the reflection of it from Other’s reaction to its perceptible manifestations.

3. Real and virtual identity; their relation to real and virtual Other.

Turkle (1995 p. 185) departs from the "conventional distinction between a constructed persona and the real self. But we shall soon encounter slippages – places where persona and self merge, places where the multiple personae join to comprise what the individual thinks of as his or her authentic self.”

Turkle’s interpretation of her observations stems from a psychoanalytic tradition. She draws a border between ”inner” and ”outer” realities, psychological experience and material and/or social reality. The border not only
divides the two domains; it marks different qualities of reality. Interactionists let the outer world permeate the inner, and the reverse. In Turkle’s interviews people often mean that: ”This is more real than my real life.” (The quotation is from p 10, but the fact is often mentioned, as also in many other sources.) How come, if there is a border between the two “worlds”? Interactionism can illustrate the question.

The border is not self evident to outline. With one year old Anne at the nursing table with her mother, it is evident that the interaction process very soon involves objects which are virtual in a sense that is similar to the computer game: traits which exist although they do not have a material and physical aspect, like that of Anne’s own body and its motions.

This makes the human identity a very special object. It is both objectively and subjectively there at the same time and for the same actor/subject. It takes up material and physical reality but is still a social construction. And the latter is experienced in related but different ways by Anne and her Others. Anne can not deny the latter ones. Differences seem to exist between Anne’s real identity construction and the one she will meet in the computer in due time. Here again she can deny none.

The other in the computer is both abstract and logical, i.e. s/he will not be angry and fight, if the gamer does not want this. The virtual Other is totally obedient and logically cooperative. Looked upon from an interactionist perspective the central question then will be: How does such a virtual Other reflect the gaming subject’s identity?

How does the everyday identity’s close connection with e.g. emotional life accord with the purely logical character of the “soft ware Other”. Turkle again: ”Simulated thinking can be thinking, but simulated love can never be love” (p. 109). Or: ”Okay, maybe people can form ‘relationships’ with computers, but computers can’t form relationships with people” (p. 112)

Still there is a similarity between computer Other and real Other: Both are to a great extent virtual.

4. MUD as a meeting between “real” people on the screen

But the computer is not only virtual meetings. There is also “chat”, both privately and in MUDs, structured arenas where you can meet real Others in a form where they emerge as symbols (and icons/avatars) on the screen. The MUD concept has developed from ”Multi-user dungeons”, connoting a virtual place (Turkle p. 180 ff), and it came to general use together with the fantasy game Dungeons and Dragons. Today MUD means ”Multi-User Domains/Dimensions”. These have in common that they are arenas, structured by a commercial actor who sets the rules, where people “talk” to each other on a stage. But it is important to notice that if this constructor wasn’t there, the virtual Other would still exist: the software of the computer system. The meeting
takes place symbolically on the screen, but you invest your own (chosen) thoughts, feelings and attitudes.

Beside this, on-line role games have developed, where people build identities through *characters* which concretize in *avatars* (the figures on the screen).

The differences that exist between real and virtual meetings between people thus seem to be limited to the difference between the real physical body and the screen appearance. Or: meeting a real person on the screen is Virtual Reality (VR) by the fact that the identity attributions made are virtual, while the physical meeting in Real Reality (RR) gives other substance to the attribution than the screen meeting does; if you are a 60 year-old man, and if you meet a 20 year-old woman in the street, it is difficult to make her believe you are a 25 year-old film star. On the screen you can.

5. Identity as Gestalt and Narrative.

After this sketch let us comment a category of concepts originally built for studying real identities. I suggest that we can try them for virtual identities as well.

The first distinction is already mentioned: personal/individual versus social identity. Children generally pay much attention to both. This is also evident in role play and games (Mead 1969 chapter 20-26). The computer now gives such possibilities in greater and more fantastic abundance than earlier.

Identity both demands and develops motivation. This is evident in the fascination that games can actualize: rather than saying that the child as a subject uses the game as an object for identity creation, you can say that play (or game) as a subject uses the child as an object. So strong is the fascination that the willful subjectivity and intentionality of the child abandons itself in play (Warncke 1987/1993 p 68 ff.) The play process is inexorably powerful. You get trapped, you can not defend yourself, you become an object for your own play. This has often been said of children. According to Turkle and also to my own pilot interviews and news media it can be said also of computer gaming teenagers.

The fascination probably derives from several sources. One such is the partly unconscious process of identification that I will call *Gestalts* (the Hero, the Good Guy, the Bad Guy, the Strong Man, the Action Man etc.). The Gestalt is a version of identity that exerts strong power over people. I have chosen the concept for several reasons. First it points to the *static*, the sculptural or photographic trait of identity, which is easier to catch than the more emergent and flexible traits. This exerts a strong fascination on children. I suggest that this is because they need clear and simple identity models, e.g. the standard stereotyped femininity of Barbie and the likewise stereotyped version of Good – Evil in the Turtles.

A second reason is the association with Gestalt psychology, that takes up the tendency to perceive phenomena in a *holistic* way rather than a fragmented one.
The parallel with Mead is simple, expressed by himself or by Blumer (1969, chapter 1): Man perceives patterns of meaning, not a world of things and events. Gestalts are results of the human urge to interpret the world. Many so-called fixation pictures constitute a play with this urge.

A third reason for my choice is that Gestalts, interpreted in either of my two first ways, have a strong emotional charge. They lift into the limelight the essence of human life: Gender, strength, beauty and intelligence. The simple world of preschool children’s Barbie and Action Man give way among teenagers to what has become the "Fantasy" genre, which thrives in the wake of Tolkien. (A stronger degree of sophistication is also evident in some new branches for toys for preschool children, e.g. the androgynous dolls Bratz (Berg 2004 and Berg & Nelson 2006)).

The fascination is strong: the young man I mentioned in the introduction chose computer game before family; he moved from home. Turkle often tells us that people find their game identity more real and important than their everyday identity. The same story is told in many other examples (e.g. in hospital diagnosis and treatment of "game dependent" youth (Berg, 2006). The Gestalt aspect probably has a great developmental potential in the world of computer games, because of its great variability. This is worth intensive study.

Another aspect of identity is the Narrative, which has as great potentials in the computer world as the Gestalt has. Possibly we can foresee a development where these two in conjunction take over most of what has, during the whole cultural history of mankind, been the folklore of fairy tales, popular poetry and the like.

The narrative aspect of identity discerns the dynamic process aspects. Tolkien might be the best example (but his books also flood with Gestalts, of course). Taken together these two are necessary basic components for identity construction. Gestalt is most evident for preschool children, narrative for older children and adults.

Some scholars in cultural social history highlight the Narrative so much – in a postmodern world – that Gestalt almost dwindles away. For example Berger (1969) and Goffman (1974 and other works) took up this theme some decades ago. Today Giddens (1991/1997) and Bauman (1991 and later works) maintain that the capacity to build a personal identity is roughly the same thing as the capacity to tell a coherent story of oneself. And the French philosopher Baudrilliard (1983 and 1988) puts forward the Narrative as if it were sheer fiction. (Giddens and Bauman would not totally agree!)

Using my observations and interviews as empirical evidence I maintain that Gestalt is still important in a postmodern world, but I don’t otherwise object to Giddens’ analysis. It is important to look for both aspects in the game. Preliminary I guess that Gestalt is heavily important, not only for youngsters. Preliminary I also believe that the two aspects are very much intertwined in games, more so than i traditional doll play and role games with ”physical” dolls.
So, the question of integration of the two will be important in research, (although also important to separate for analytical reasons).

Identification can be regarded as a developmental process which can be highlighted in the narrative aspect of Identity. This can help us to study the dialectics between Gestalt and Narrative. Looking at the Turtles, we soon find that their extremely clear crystallization of Good – Evil fascinate boys aged 4 – 6, but that older children find them too predictable and boring. The behavioral science has not yet worked much with distinctions like Gestalt and Narrative. It should do so.

In sum, Gestalt and Narrative as aspects of identity seem to be very important in computer gaming. In fact, games often are built up on virtual Gestalts and Narratives.

The Narrative also points to the concept of action and event. This has great importance in parts of social psychology: action precedes and creates (or at least deeply affects) consciousness. The latter constitutes a distancing, a way of standing beside oneself as actor and to observe the act as an object. Through this it becomes possible to keep events and narratives in the mind/memory. This process of distancing is made possible, says Mead, only by the active response from the Other to the actions of the subject. Only the You can give the Ego the capacity to contemplate its own act. Therefore let us look at some aspects of the concept of action, and the function of the You in this.

6. Action and existence; body and mind; emotion and cognition.

Let us differentiate between two phases and stages of identification: Functional identification can be to do what the model does (i.e. imitation), or to anticipate what the model does, without really taking up his/her mind. The example could be the classic meadian example of the dogfight: Without being conscious of it, one dog anticipates the others’ behavior; a ”conversation of gestures” will emerge. The other sort is existential identification, i.e. to experience oneself as if one were (as) the model in a more holistic way, taking up his/her mind.

Translated to the game world: The simple figure Mario (Nintendo) is hardly something to identify existentially with. The figure Mario is simply a tool to manage to do certain things in a certain tempo in a certain order in an efficient way. This is functional identification. But the characters you build up in the World of Warcraft creates avatars which give you an illusion of existentially being there in the ”world” you are participating in, and being there with the character you create. And you act In relation to other characters. This is (more of) existential identification.

We should not reduce functional identification to mere imitation, because it can instead be anticipating or adjusting to the responses of the other. This is in the case of dogs partly instinctive, partly a result of learning, (but there is no evidence of existential identification of one dog with the other, only of
protection from physical hurt). Still this is Mead's example of the first stages of development of conscious intelligence of organisms with a Self (Mead 1934/1969, introductory essays).

The border between functional and existential identification should not be conceived of as absolute or visible. This is evident already in Mead's formulations in part I of Mind, Self and society. The function of "taking the attitude of the other" in the conversation of gestures is the best example of what Mead meant. Simple versions of this type of conversation grow into existential identification when the case is that the gestures call out a similar response in one individual as in the other (and, of course, when other conditions like a complex nervous system are rich and similar enough). The transmission of elementary reactions like overt fear or sorrow, like crying can serve as example. Even yawning is contagious, as we know. So are laughter and tears. These emotionally intensive events are possibly the first elementary processes of existential identification.

But where is the border between functional and existential identification? This is a question of border drawing. Mourning, for example, is a subtle existential state of consciousness, which contagious effect e.g. Arthur Janov cultivated in practice in his primal therapy. But where is the border to simple functional identification? New born infants "infect" each other with the crying of colic. Is this functional or existential? Perhaps it is the prime example of the former growing into the latter.

However, the answer to the question of borders may not be important. What is important is the principle of sociality in the median sense: First, to take the role of the other individual, which is achieved through influencing yourself as you influence the other. When this process goes on, the second point will come when you do not only do what the other does or adjust your action to his action as in the dog fight, but when you begin to feel his feelings, as when the newborn child cries from listening to the other crying child. (Roletaking is originally an emotional process, says Mead.) And from this point you will come to the central third point, where the conscious mind of the other paces its way into your mind. The central point is thus: functional identification comes first, in concrete action, and when the process matures existential identification can follow.

In a nutshell we can illustrate the thing in a somewhat tense analogy: If a mother (or father) is exceedingly anxious for the social surrounding and if s/he expresses this for the baby, the baby might develop a character of a corresponding neurotically anxious sort as the parent carries. Then we have, by continuous "training", created from an infantile functional identification an existential adult one.

Let us transport this scene to a well known example in the screen world. There are, possibly, cases where a person goes out in town and assaults another person because the "character" has instructed him so. That it is an "insane" act does not diminish the existential character of the identification process. The
opposite works the same way: to donate your big fortune to the poor because of the character’s instructions.

Given this distinction, there is a vast area to study in computer games: Why does existential identification emerge only in certain games, functional only in others? This becomes a research question with intricate implications for game industry, pedagogic and identity psychology. What consequences do the two types have? Is an existential identification more associated with strong motivation and involvement than functional?

Intermediate forms are probably numerous, as the distinction is not discrete but continuous. The popular shoot-your-enemy game Counter Strike, e.g., seemingly concerns different methods to render your co-player harmless in different arenas. The skill here is pure functional identification by anticipating his actions and responding to them before he delivers them. (Compare the meadian dog fight.)

But in an interview that I made with an adult game freak he showed a different dimension as well. You chose your weapon with regard to the “enemy”. A novice should be approached with a knife while a skilled opponent must be handled with a shooting weapon. It also happens that you give each other compliments or reproaches by chatting on the screen while the fight goes on. Such meta levels are associated with different evaluations. You can gain higher status in the game by acting on meta levels. Here you have clearly existential identification with an ideal model, e.g. the noble hero who shows mercy for an enemy, made harmless.

Whether one and the same game can include a spectrum from simple functional identification to existential, or different games call out different types is a question of empirical research. To “echo sound” the border between the two types would constitute such research. C. S. is evidently a game that begins with much functionality, but which also will include progressive existential identification.

Mead would call C.S. a conversation of gestures. But the process in gaming involves much more subtly differentiated conversation and does probably not presuppose such distinct instinctual processes as the dog fight also includes, beside the conversation of gestures. In particular, it is evident that the gaming rests on the development of “meaning”, which is not necessary to explain the dog fight. For example, the “shooting” with the “guns” on the screen indicates meanings such as “winning”, “losing”, dying” or “surviving”. There is no need of taking such meanings into consideration in the dog fight. The simple meanings in C. S. then evolves to more subtle levels where in the end Gestalts and complex meaning systems, such as “hero” “noble”, “gentleman” or “villain” and the like, emerge.

In Meads pragmatist theory (as well as Deweys, of course) where identification in the full sense depends not on inner attitudes and thoughts, but the latter, as well as identification as a whole, depends on overt social action
(gestures), it is important to state that the earlier functional stages are a precondition for the later existential ones. This should be interesting for game industry.

The distinction between functional and existential identification is basic, and on this we can then construct some well known cultural products, such as the distinction between body (functional) and soul/psyche (existential and experience dependent) which is the basis for Cartesian philosophy. Coupled to this we also have emotional and cognitive identification, important in developmental psychology as well as in the object relation school version of psychoanalysis.

Emotional identification in one sense is more basic than cognitive, and it is more linked to body than to psyche (Engdahl 2004). We can base this on Mead’s theory of the four phases of the act (Mead 1938/1972, essay 1), that states that each act has a primitive or not reflected origin in two phases of impulsive and perceptive character, where the drive is the emotional or drive satisfaction value for the individual, and that there is also some problem that must be overcome for the act to become consciously recognized.

Engdahl, in her interpretation of Mead, develops the argument that emotions are more directly connected to the perceptual systems of the body, than cognition is. Incipient emotional action precedes the act of consciousness. Then, if we accept the premise that functional identification is more immediately connected to the body than to the psyche, we can put together functional, physical/bodily and emotional aspects of identification in one category, a more basic, primitive or not reflected one than the other category that embraces the existential, psychic and cognitive aspects.

Further, we can distinguish between complete and incomplete identification. I studied this empirically in children’s play with dolls (Berg 2002, Berg 2004 and Berg/Nelson 2006). Such play concerns many important things. The most simple one is that a child identifies with certain aspects of a model, but not with other aspects. Why? How is the existential identification, given this distinction? What will the pedagogical consequences be? One example from our pilot study is that in certain moments the child talks through the doll with disguised voice (the child becomes the doll), while the same child in another phase of the play uses the doll as an illustration of what the child wants to do itself (the doll becomes the child). Sometimes the doll is turned toward the playmate’s doll and the doll is made to act out the relevant actions, while sometimes the doll is made passive while the playing child acts against its co player in its own person, with the doll just functioning as an illustrating attribute.

You can hypothesize the complete identification, where the doll is made to simulate the whole range of actions is associated with a strong and versatile empathy with the play. This would indicate a tendency towards emotional aspects, and thus functional and physical also, given the sketch above. But complete identification can also be imagined to demand more cognitive work.
than incomplete. So it would come closer to cognitive and psychic and existential identification. This seems like an anomaly in the system, deserving empirical attention.

In sum, we distinguish a functional and an existential aspect of identification. The former can further be linked to the body, to concrete action and to emotional identification, while the latter is more linked to psychic states and builds up also a cognitive identification.

7. Identification and the stages in the act.

Computer games exhibit a special mix of different stages in a maturation process. Mead (1938/1972, pp 3-25) analyzes four different stages in any ordinary act. They are the stages of impulse, perception, manipulation and consummation. In this sketch we can discern an aspect of maturation, which I want to use in order to round up my statement. (Mead does not explicitly do this. I try to draw his sketch a bit further.)

An act is a phenomenon that gradually develops a greater and greater “scope”, and thereby a maturation. The further it develops, the more we can see its history: First I feel hunger (impulse) and soon the refrigerator is there before my searching eyes (perception). I hurry to get necessary utensils ready to make my sandwich and subsequently to crush it between my teeth (manipulation). A feeling of satisfied hunger, but also of the heavenly taste of my favorite cheese comes to me (consummation). The scope of the act increases much by the comparison with other cheeses that I know, and concurrently this act as a whole is associated with innumerable other acts that I have done (or am about to do later).

Now we can put together our themes: emotions, the functional identification and the physical aspects can be regarded as a process that is spontaneous or primitive and not mediated. It is pre reflective. We refer these to the earlier, not consummated stages of the act, while existential, psychic, cognitively experienced identification is more advanced or developed from the primitive level and belong to the later, integrated stages; the manipulation, where all aspects of the act seem to appear, and above all the consummation, where the act is grasped and meditated as a whole, and where an integrating phase emerges. Reflective thinking or consciousness in full extension is possible only here. In Mead’s terminology: Reflective thought is possible only at the consummation stage.

From here we can catch a glimpse of a voluminous mapping of computer gaming. This constitutes a prolonged project, passing the borders of this paper. I will, therefore, finish off with a hypothesis of the specific mixture for the computer game Counter Strike, regarded from the point of view of this sketch of stages in the act. We can immediately discern some points:

1) A thrill of simple, swift and non reflective behavior: The C. S. has a strong stress on the primitive stages, but in combination with an anticipated
consummation stage. The game demands skill, e.g. in velocity of physical reaction. Anybody who has tried this or some similar game knows that this can be thrilling by its sheer fastness. There are many forerunners from ancient times, and we produce today more and more complicated versions, e.g. car driving simulations for both fun and training. Even the latter are experienced as very fun and they are used as “edutainment”. The consummation stage is reduced to the simple registration of the fact of success or failure. The whole game in effect seems to live almost only in the manipulation stage, because the premises are so simple: the only demand is to be fast, or faster than your play mate. So the manipulation stage seems to be bound up by the simple conditions of the impulse and perception stages.

2) Reflectively integrating thought: But there is much more to C S. The simple thrilling moments just described are completed with traits which belong to the consummation stage: I shake hands with my opponent, I give him compliments and we socialize, chatting comments about our game. All this is processed by an intricate system of symbolization on the screen. And long afterwards we can smilingly look at ourselves on a distance, fighting ferociously on the screen to “kill” each other. And still further afterwards we may be wondering how we could spend so much time on C S, when so much else could be done instead.

3) Compression: In a very short while you can go from the elementary stages of an act (Meads concept: incipient act) to the concluding consummation. A scene in a role game including figures and landscapes in physical reality would take a long time to construct, carry through and finish. Still it is essentially about the same thing: To conquer or kill an “enemy”. In C. S. the same end is achieved in a second. In on-line-games the same thing is achieved with much greater complexity, with the illusory power of visual electronic media, without inefficient consumption, and with the full potential of your own will and skill.

This combination of primitive behavioral components and complicated intellectual powers should constitute an important field of research in computer games. We can launch a hypothesis: The strong fascination that evidently grasps many gamers derives part of its vigor from this combination. Basic functions for body and psyche are engaged, at the same time as they can come to expression only in a context that constitutes a very sophisticated game system, the flexibility of which by far transcends traditional forms of games.

Extremes meet. Excitement arises. Gamers grow passionate by the combination of being at the same time very elementary and very sophisticated. It is tempting to remind of Meads definition of sociality and its potential creativity: Sociality is the capacity to have the attitude of at least two individuals at the same time, or to occupy at least two places in space and/or time at the same time. It is also of interest to realize that this definition is Meads most minimal and elementary definition, i.e. it is the condition of the basic levels of role taking.
In sum: The four meadian stages in the act seem to be proper to analyze different aspects of the fascination that gaming gives rise to. At the same time gaming seems adequate to conceptualize the meadian theory of stages in the act. Finally, gaming shows us a concentrate of the complexity of the human act.

8. A question – or a riddle?

A basic theme of my text has been the question: Where – if anywhere – is the border between everyday life “real” identity and “virtual” or screen identity? What characteristics does such a border have? In conclusion I will return to this question in a straight way, by taking up one example from an interview in Turkle’s material. It concerns the possibility to locate the border between the two domains, by describing how a habitual game player can take up the question of identity.

Turkle interviewed a gamer who compares the MUDs with readymade games, where you do not create your screen identity yourself (op. cit. p. 236): ’”Nintendo has a good one (game) where you can play four characters. But even though they are very cool,” he says, “they are written up for you.” They seem artificial. In contrast, on the MUDs, he says, “There is nothing written up.” He says he feels free. MUDs are ”for real” because you make them up yourself.’ (Marks of quotation signify Turkle’s own quotations from the young man.)

Turkle refrains from a deeper analysis of the shifts that are found in such a phrasing. Let us use my perspective for a moment: concerning identity there is always from the very beginning an element of virtuality, because my identity is always my “interpretation” of your responses to my action. My identity is the work of reflection and symbolization, passing through at least two persons. Going back to Turkle’s formulations we can dissect at least three levels of virtuality. The first one is taken for granted and natural – non virtual – by both Turkle and the boy; it is said to be there sui generis from scratch. This is the level of ordinary social life. Next level, that of the MUD, is natural for the boy, but less so for Turkle, who often puts questions for the informant in which she asks him/her to think and reflect on the difference between the presence of a real human in flesh and blood and the virtual but still real other on the MUD screen, who is not obviously playing a game. The third level, the one of Nintendo, seems artificial also for the boy.

I put forward the hypothesis that the approaching to each other of extremes produce an excitement, a fascination for the game. Maybe this fascination can also be understood as search for the point on the scale from “real/natural” over “almost real” to “virtual”, where the person finds him/herself. This is similar to the tension between two dialectic poles. And the excitement might increase from the lack of clear insight in what your identity looks like in the “real” end of the scale. Maybe there is even a lack of belief that there is an end pole for this continuum. Some of the answers Turkle gets indicate such a point of view.
Her book ends with a clear vision of an attitude that has invisibly permeated text. She says that computer gamers are pioneers for a new age and a new type of identity, although she also seems to maintain the belief in a “real” end of the continuum. I want just to add that this new type of identity is not new. It is only a more radical application of the reflective activity that is always there in all identity construction. Identity in itself is always virtual, and the impression of reality is but a variation of the degree of real physical presence of our game mates.

For example the physical sexual act should be the nearest we could come to “real” identity and “real” meeting with the other. But today there is no provocative substance in the standpoint that much of the love you feel for the other derives from your own longing for the perfect ideal self identity. Even the body in its physical presence is an object of interpretations that can be extreme. Why can an anorectic girl find herself fat, while a corpulent middle aged gentleman finds himself bodily handsome (Hallerstedt 1996)? The body gets transformed to an object of subjective meaning (Blumer 1969, chapter 1 and Mead 1969 part 1). This can be observed already at the entrance of a gym today.

This is the thesis I work: What the MUD does is just to drive to extremes the virtuality that is already there when you respond to my action, as you interpret it, and it grows even more virtual when I interpret your responses. And at top of it all my own capacity to create meaning in my own action, (i.e. my consciousness of self and its action) is in itself a result of your meeting with me through your responses to my action. This last point is the basis for Meads radical analysis.

There is a famous painting of Magritte: a smoking pipe of typically French style, with a headline above: This is not a pipe. (“Cela ne`est pas une pipe.”) Magritte is right; it is a picture of a pipe. And my action, when received by you is already a picture i.e. your interpretation. And this picture is superimposed with a new interpretation by me when I take it back from you. This is the everyday virtuality of identity bouncing. Millions of computer gamers have discovered that gaming is a way of playing with ever new identities.

References (given in Swedish, where I have used Swedish text):
- (1999) Developmental play stages in child identity construction; an interactionistic theoretical contribution. Article in International Journal of


Metro, 06-11-29, Swedish edition.

Rapport 06-11-29


MULTIPROFESSIONAL TEAMWORK IN A PSYCHIATRIC SETTING: FROM WHAT PERSPECTIVES ARE THE PATIENTS VIEWED DURING TREATMENT CONFERENCE?

Suzanne Blomqvist

Introduction

Multiprofessional teamwork has become a model of practice promoted in many areas (Guzzo & Shea, 1992; Jones & Roelofsma, 2000; McGrath, 2000; Paris et al, 2000; Sundstrom et al, 1990; Tannenbaum et al, 1996;). In the healthcare sector, multiprofessional teamwork is becoming a common way to organize health care services. This is especially so in areas where the patients’ care needs are extensive and multidimensional.

Swedish psychiatric care is based on the assumption that the aetiology of psychiatric symptoms is multidimensional (Cullberg, 2000; Ottosson, 1999; Wrangsjö, 2003; Åsberg & Herlofsson, 1991). This makes a multiprofessional approach preferable when organizing psychiatric care services.

In research on multiprofessional teams in healthcare settings the problems of multiprofessional teamwork have been the focus of attention. The study to be presented is a part of a larger study, and the aim of the larger study is to investigate what are important influencing factors on work performed by multiprofessional psychiatric teams.

An important part of psychiatric teamwork is the treatment conference where the team discusses their patients to decide on a treatment plan. The aim of the study is to describe to what extent the biological, psychological and social perspective is used when discussing patients during treatment conference.

Background and aims

Multiprofessional health care teams

In the healthcare sector, multiprofessional teamwork is rapidly becoming a common way to organize health care services (Molneux, 2001; Heinemann et al 1999; Hyer et al 2000; West & Poulton, 1997; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1995). This is especially so in areas where the patients care need is extensive and
multidimensional, such as in palliative, diabetes, and cancer and psychiatric care.

The purpose of the multiprofessional team is to bring together different skills and combine them in a way that is not possible outside a team. The team has to make use of the different skills and knowledge for the patient’s benefit, and the aims of a multiprofessional health care team might be described as to:

- Achieve accurate and speedy diagnosis.
- Plan and implement effective integrated treatment and care.
- Communicate effectively with the patient, with other agencies involved in the care of the patient, and within itself.
- Audit its activities and outcomes.

“Multiprofessional team” is a term sometimes used to describe a variety of different multiprofessional working arrangements in health care services. A common use of the term is illustrated by the citation below (Blomqvist, 2004):

”An interdisciplinary health care team is an identified collective in which members share common team goals and work interdependently in planning, problem solving, decision making and implementing and evaluating team related tasks”

(Drinka, 1994, s 87)

To meet the patients’ different kinds of needs a multiprofessional health care team includes practitioners from different professions (e.g. Drinka, 1994). The specialists that may be included are physicians, clinical nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, psychologists and occupational therapists.

Factors effecting performance of health care teams

A multiprofessional health care team is subject to the influence of many different factors, just as any work group is, and there are many ways to describe what influences the performance of work groups (e.g. Hackman, 1990; McGrath, 1985; Paris et al, 2000; Sundstrom et al, 1990). Reviewing research on team performance in general, Paris et al (2000) describes different kinds of influencing factors. Influencing factors is described as contextual factors, structural factors, team design factors, process factors and contingency factors.

Research in the area of multiprofessional teamwork in the health care settings has primarily focused on factors within the team, such as team design and process factors (Blomqvist, 2004). Less attention has been given to factors outside the team. One team design factor has more then any other been the focus of attention, and that is the professional diversity inherent in multiprofessional
health care teams. The fact that the team consists of persons from several different kinds of professions is something that in research literature is thought to highly affect the work performed by the team. To be able to make use of the professional diversity in the team, certain aspects of teamwork has to be especially taken into consideration. The problems that might arise from the professional diversity in a multiprofessional health care team are what primarily have drawn the attention of researchers.

One difficulty that is mentioned in literature is that members of multiprofessional health care teams do not always have adequate knowledge of each other’s competence (Waskett, 1996). It seems to be a rare thing in educating health care professionals to give the students the opportunity to learn about other health care professions ways to define problems and options for interventions. A professional individualism is embodied in the “cognitive map” of a discipline, that is, its overall paradigmatic and conceptual apparatus, including basic concepts, observational approaches, problem definition, and explanatory structures (Clarke, 1996). It has been suggested that the diversity of a multiprofessional health care team can be managed productively only when members understands each other’s different kinds of perspective and successfully combine their ideas.

Another problem that has been noted is what you might call professionally based ethnocentricity (Boone, 1997; Herrman et al, 2002; Parker, 2002; Shoefield & Amodeo, 1999). Having been trained predominantly in unprofessional settings, professionals in a team tend to assume that their way of framing the problem and solutions for the client is the best or at least the most adequate.

Team members’ attitudes toward teamwork are something that will affect the performance of the team (Heineman et al, 1999; Hyer et al, 2000; Sundstrom et al, 1990). Attitudes are often determinants of behaviour, and attitudes toward teamwork may have important influence on participation in teams, the quality of team function, and ultimately, the quality of patient care. Team members may fear an infringement of their professional territory, to be pressured by other team members to take on tasks outside their professional role, and to lose traditionally based authority and status. If team members hold a negative attitude toward teamwork, this is something that will be an obstacle in obtaining high quality teamwork.

The different professions in the multiprofessional health care team might be seen in terms of different roles, and the concept of role is widely employed in research on interprofessional work. The concept of role is usually understood as the expectations I have of what I am supposed to do in my work, and what other
expect me to do. In literature it is suggested that a very important requisite for successful teamwork is clarity of roles (e.g. Boon et al, 1997). Role ambiguity, overlap and role conflicts is said to be destructive to the outcome of teamwork. Role ambiguity can lead to misplaced expectations on what other members of the team should do. It can also lead to a situation where certain tasks become no one’s responsibility. Role overlap might result in competition for certain assignments, and also to several team members unknowingly working on the same assignment.

*Power issues*, like influence, status and control, are among the aspects of teamwork that in research literature is described as something that highly affect the work performed by the team (e.g. Pagliari & Grimshaw, 2002; Vinkur-Kaplan, 1995). It has been suggested that the health care service delivered by a multiprofessional health care team can only profit from the teams multitude of skills and knowledge if the influence over team work is fairly equally distributed between team members. It seems likely that what affects influence in multiprofessional health care teams is very similar to what affects influence in any small workgroup. The findings in research on small workgroups consistently indicate strong association between high external status, high participation and high influence in small workgroups.

To summarize

Important aspects of member characteristics that has been highlighted in research literature is the team members knowledge of each other’s *competence*, and of each other’s different basic concepts, observational approaches, problem definitions and explanatory structures. Another important aspect of member characteristics is team member’s *attitudes* toward each other, and toward teamwork.

The work performed by a multiprofessional health care team is affected, as any work group is, by a number process factors. Some aspects of these factors have in research literature been indicated as especially important to quality of work performed by a multiprofessional health care teams. *Role clarity* is important, and so is an equal division of *influence* over teamwork and a collaborative way to solve differences of opinion.

**Multiprofessional teams in Swedish psychiatry**

During the last 30 years psychiatric care in Sweden has gone through some fundamental changes (Crafoord, 1987; Socialstyrelsen, 1997). One of these changes concerns how the origin of psychiatric symptoms is viewed. The assumption that psychiatric symptoms primarily have a physiological cause has been abandoned. Instead nowadays, Swedish psychiatric care is based on the
assumption that the aetiology of psychiatric symptoms is multidimensional (Cullberg, 2000; Haugsgjerd, 1986; Ottoisson, 1999; Socialstyrelsen, 1999; Wrangsjö, 2002; Åsberg & Herlofsson, 1991). It is assumed that psychiatric symptoms can be caused by both physiological and psychological factors as well as social factors. The National board of Health and Welfare is very explicit in its multidimensional view of the aetiology of psychiatric symptoms (Socialstyrelsen, 1997). It is seen as essential that psychiatric care includes the possibility of physiological, psychological as well as social interventions. Multiprofessional teamwork is therefore since many years a preferred practice in Swedish psychiatric care (Bullington, 1991).

To meet the patients’ different needs a multiprofessional psychiatric team includes practitioners from different professions. The specialists that usually are included in a psychiatric team are physicians, clinical nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, psychologists and occupational therapists (Socialstyrelsen, 1999). Multiprofessional psychiatric teams may vary in size between 4-5 team members up to 10-12.

A multidimensional way to view the patient is a necessary prerequisite for the designing of a treatment plan that takes into consideration physiological, psychological and social needs of the patient. Research on teamwork in psychiatric settings, nationally and internationally, shows that we know very little of whether psychiatric teams make full use of their multiprofessional competence (Allugander, 1992; Bagnato et al, 1999; Buszewitz, 1998; Moss, 1994; Ryan, 1996) As mentioned above, research on multiprofessional teamwork in health care settings has focused primarily on the problems professionally based diversity might lead to. Little is said about what might facilitate multiprofessional cooperation in health care teams. How multiprofessional psychiatric teams make use of their multiprofessional competence, and what might facilitate multiprofessional cooperation, is therefore two interesting subject to try to shed light upon.

**The aim of the study**

The aim of this study is to investigate how psychiatric teams makes use of their multiprofessional competences. Essential to the coordination of work performed by a psychiatric team is the team conference. During team conference team members discusses patients to plan and coordinate integrated treatment and care. In this study teamwork during treatment conference will be studied in order to describe to what extent the biological, psychological and social perspective is used when discussing patients during treatment conference.
Methods

Ten psychiatric teams in treatment conference

Ten multiprofessional psychiatric teams participated in the study. The teams were part of the outpatient psychiatric service in three different counties in Middle Sweden. The professions represented in the teams were physicians, clinical nurses, social workers, physiotherapists, psychologists and occupational therapists. The number of members in each team varied between 10 to 16 people, the number of each profession varied as described below:

Table 1: Professions in the 10 psychiatric teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical nurse</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant nurse</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational therapist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiotherapist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0,5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study accounts for observations of a total of 30 treatment conferences, 3 conferences from each team. The conferences varied in time between 42 and 134 minutes with an average of 107 minutes. The total amount of time observed was 35,4 h. During the 30 treatment conferences a total of 224 patients were discussed. The number of patients discussed varied between 2 and 17 with an average of 7,5 patients. Forty percent of the patients discussed were new to the team, and 60 percent were patients in ongoing treatment.

Data collection

The aim of the study was to investigate how the psychiatric team draw upon their multiprofessional competence in their work. Direct observation was used for collecting data, and this choice was motivated by the fact that it is what the team members actually does that constitutes the psychiatric care received by the patients. What matters when it comes to patient care is what the team members actually do, and not for instance their conception of their actions. To choose direct observation as method for data collection was also motivated by the fact that most studies on multiprofessional teamwork in health care settings has used team members self rapport as method for collecting data (Blomqvist, 2004).
The mode of registration used was video tape recording. This way of making observations was considered to have the smallest effect on the situation to be observed. This method for making observations also ensures an exact version of what is said and by whom. The team conferences were video recorded by the researcher at their ordinary time and place.

**Analysis**

The aim of this study was to describe to what extent the biological, psychological and social perspective was used when discussing patients during treatment conference. A content analysis was made using written transcriptions of the discussions recorded at the team conferences. Predefined categories were used for the analysis, and the kind of quantitative content analysis used in this study can be described by the following quotations (my italics):

"Content analysis is a technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.”

(Holsti, 1969:14, in Bryman, 2000)

"Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952:18, in Bryman, 2000)

Data was categorized in a schematic way in order to describe to what extent the different perspectives were used, the physical perspective, the psychological perspective, and the social perspective. What was said during treatment conference was also categorized in terms of to what part of the discussion it belonged. According to sequences of the discussion, data was categorized as: Describing the patient, Suggesting causes to the patients symptoms, Suggesting interventions, and Deciding on interventions.

What was categorized from the discussions is what might be called “unit of analysis” (Bryman, 2000). In this study the unit of analysis was a sentence, or part of a sentence, in which patients were described, causes to the patients symptoms were suggested, interventions were suggested or interventions were decided on. Each unit of analysis was categorized in accordance with to which part of the discussion it belonged, and to what perspective is being used. This quotation might serve as an illustration:

“I would like to discuss someone new to us. This woman has since many years a severe heart condition, but her the reason for contacting us is strong feelings of not wanting to go on living. She has been married to her present husband for 6 years, has two daughters from her
former marriage, and she is working part time at a day care centre. The symptoms she describes are strong feelings of hopelessness, and also rather severe cognitive disturbances.”

The quotation breaks down into 7 units of analysis:

- This woman has since many years a severe heart condition (Description/Physical aspect)
- but her the reason for contacting us is strong feelings of not wanting to go on living (Description/Psychological aspect)
- She has been married to her present husband for 6 years (Description/Social aspect)
- has two daughters from her former marriage (Description/Social aspect)
- and she is working part time at a day care centre (Description/Social aspect)
- The symptoms she describes are strong feelings of hopelessness (Description/Psychological aspect)
- and also rather severe cognitive disturbances (Description/Psychological aspect)

The total amount of units of analysis in the material was 6722. The amount of units of analysis in one conference varied between 75 and 478, with an average of 232.

To perform the content analysis the computer program NVivo was used, software specially designed for analysing qualitative data.

**Findings**

**Discussing the patient**

The results from the observation study disclosed that the largest part of discussions during treatment conference is used for describing patients. As can be seen in the figure below 90,5% of the units of analysis concerned describing the patient. Only 2,1% concerned suggesting causes for the patients symptoms, and 5,4% concerned suggesting interventions. Only 2% of the units of analysis concerned making decisions on interventions.
Noticeable is that a very large part of the discussion is spent on describing the patient, in relation to analysing the patients problems, and suggesting and deciding on interventions.

**Describing the patient**

The content analysis showed that when describing the patients during treatment conference the social perspective was most frequently used (49,9%). The physiological and psychological perspective were used to a lesser extent (8,3% and 5,9%). An additional way to describe the patients was by using what you might call *everyday expressions*. Expressions that could not be categorised as neither a physiological, psychological nor a social perspective (25,5%). Another additional way to describe the patients was by using what might be called *psychiatric terminology* (10,4%).

As can be seen in the figure above the social aspect of the patient and the patient’s life is what predominantly is described. A frequent way to describe the
patient is also by using every day expressions. Physical and psychological aspects are described to a far lesser extent.

**Suggesting causes of symptoms**

The analyse showed that when making suggestions concerning what might cause the patients symptoms, the social aspect was still very much in focus (42%). But in this part of the discussions the psychological aspect of the patient was just as dominant (43%). The thought that the patient’s symptoms might have a physical cause was the least often suggested (15%).

![Bar chart showing factors suggested contributing to the patients’ symptoms](image)

*Figure 3. Factors suggested contributing to the patients’ symptoms.*

As can be seen in the figure above much more attention is given to the psychological aspect of the patient when it comes to suggesting possible causes for the patient’s symptoms, compared to when describing patients.

**Suggesting interventions**

When it comes to suggesting interventions that might prove helpful to the patient, the focus of attention changes once more. As can be seen in the figure below the most frequently suggested interventions are physical ones (38,3%). Psychological interventions are also frequently suggested (34,4%). Social interventions are the least often suggested (25,3%).
The findings show that when it comes to suggesting interventions, the team members no longer primarily focus on the social aspect of the patient and the patients life. Instead the physical aspect of the patient is for the first time given a lot of attention. Far more attention than when describing the patient or suggesting possible causes for the patient’s symptoms.

**Deciding on interventions**

When the teams during team conference make explicit decisions on interventions, the focus of attention again changes. As can be seen in the figure below, psychological interventions are those most frequently decided on (51,6%). Followed by social interventions (39,8%) and physical interventions (8,6%).

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62
Noticeable is that though physical interventions were to most frequently suggest ones, they are the least often decided on.

To summarize

The results from this study indicates that when describing the patient during team conference, a lot of attention is given to the social aspect of the patient and the patient’s life. When looking at the discussions in total, describing the patient constitutes a large part of the discussion. A little over 90 percent of the units of analysis included in the study concerns describing the patients, and almost half of the descriptions made concern the social aspect of the patients and their lives. When it comes to giving information about the patients, the social perspective seems to be dominating in relation to the physiological and psychological perspective.

Looking at the discussions in total, far less attention is given to suggesting causes to the patient’s problems, and suggesting and deciding on interventions. Only about 10 percent of the units of analysis included in the study concern these parts of the discussion. And when it comes to these parts of the discussions, the relationship between the three different aspects varies. Psychological and social factors dominate suggestions on what might cause the patients symptoms. Physical and psychological interventions are predominantly suggested, while psychological and social interventions predominantly are decided on.

Discussion

The reason for having multi professional teams in health care service is to bring together different professional skills and combine them in a way that is not possible outside a team. The team has to make use of the different skills and knowledge for the benefit of the patient.

People in most work-groups are different in a lot of ways. They might differ in sex, age, race, and education. Members of multiprofessional health care teams differ in these ways to, but there is one other important difference that is central to the purpose of the team – people have different professional backgrounds and training. Professional socialisation and culture is powerful. Years of professional education shape team member’s attitudes and values, and how they understand and meet a client’s needs.

The differences in professional background are in research literature described as the most essential element affecting team work in health care settings. To make use of the professional diversity, to be able to combine the different perspectives represented in the team, certain aspects of teamwork has to be especially taken into consideration.
The aim of this study was to investigate how psychiatric teams draw upon their multiprofessional competence. Swedish psychiatric care is based on the assumption that the aetiology of psychiatric symptoms is multidimensional. It is assumed that psychiatric symptoms can be caused by both physiological and psychological factors as well as social factors. It is seen as essential that psychiatric care includes the possibility of physiological, psychological as well as social interventions. Multiprofessional teamwork is therefore since many years a preferred practice in Swedish psychiatric care.

Teamwork during psychiatric treatment conference was studied in order to describe to what extent the biological, psychological and social perspective was used when discussing patients during treatment conference.

Then what does the results from this study tell us about how these psychiatric team make use of their professional diversity? To what extent was the biological, psychological and social perspective used when discussing patients during treatment conference?

The result of this study indicates that when it comes to giving information about the patients, information supposedly used to form a basis for decisions on treatment, the social perspective seems to be dominating in relation to the physiological and psychological perspective. The domination of the social perspective might be a consequence of this being the most important area in patient’s life to consider when deciding on a treatment plan. But it might also be a consequence of the teams not making full use of their multiprofessional competence.

When it comes to suggesting causes to the patient’s problems, and when deciding on interventions, the psychological and social perspective has a clear dominance in relation to the physiological perspective. Only when it comes to suggesting interventions is the relationship between the different perspectives fairly equal. As suggested earlier, describing patients primarily from a social perspective might be a correct assessment in relation to patient needs. The way perspectives vary when it comes to analysing the patient’s problems and deciding on a treatment plan might also be the consequence of an accurate assessment of patient needs. But, it might also be the result of the teams not taking full advantage of the diverse competences inherit in a multiprofessional team.

The result from this study also demonstrates that during treatment conference the 10 teams being studied used the largest part of the discussion for describing the patients. A little over 90 percent of the units of analysis concerns giving information on the patient. In giving information on the patient, the social perspective is by far the most dominant, together with describing the patient using every day expressions. When it comes to making full use of the team’s multiprofessional competence during treatment conference, it might be worth
considering other possible influences on the discussion then the welfare of the patient. The discussion might for instance be influenced by a need for playing down the professional differences in the team, differences that might be seen as a potential cause for conflict. To focus mainly on the social aspect of the patient’s life, and using a lot of everyday expressions when describing the patient, might serve as a way to avoid discussing aspects of the patient that might not be understood by all the team members. Thereby making it obvious that the team members differ in their professional background.

The differences in professional background are in research literature described as the most essential element affecting teamwork in health care settings. Not recognizing differences in a team, and not thinking about how to make use of them, is to miss an opportunity to use the diversity for the patient’s benefit. From research in high diversity groups it is suggested that the common element in high performing groups with high member diversity is the integration of that diversity (Clark, 1996; Drinka, 1994; Prescott & Bowen, 1985; Tjosvold & Tjosvold, 1995; Weiss & Davis, 1985; Welch et al, 1992).

How then is this integration of different perspectives to come about? When it comes to integrating different perspectives during team discussions, several authors refer to a model of interpersonal problem-solving behaviour proposed by Kilmann and Thomas (Baggs & Smith, 1988; Drinka, 1994; Prescott & Bowen, 1985; Weiss & Davis, 1985). Kilmann and Thomas (1977, in Baggs & Smith, 1988) proposed that in interpersonal problem-solving situations an individual uses one of five distinct modes: avoidance, accommodation, compromise, competition or collaboration. These modes may be perceived along a two-dimensional grid, considering the degree to which individuals are acting assertive during resolution of the problem and the degree to which they are acting cooperatively during the problem resolution.

![Figure 6. Different ways to handle disagreement (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977).](image-url)
The collaborating mode is the mode said to contribute to the resolving of a problem in a way that builds upon the contribution of all parties to form a new way of conceptualizing the problem. Collaboration has a high degree of both assertiveness and cooperativeness, in contrast to modes in which one yield completely to the others concerns, may strive to satisfy ones own concerns with no regards for others, or may compromise some important concerns. Collaboration involves attempts to find integrative solutions where both parties concerns are recognized and important concerns are not compromised.

Another important aspect of the possible integration of the diversity in a multiprofessional health care team concerns what kind of leadership is exercised. In research literature certain aspects of leadership is pointed out as especially important for the efficiency of a multi professional health care team, and one important aspect concerns the integration of the team diversity (e.g. Schofield & Amodeo, 1999; Shalinsky, 1989; Yank et al, 1992). Literature suggests that a leader of a multi professional health care team should take steps to ensure that team members have good knowledge of each other’s competence, make clarification on team roles, introduce a structure to ensure equality of influence over teamwork, and a structure to ensure that decisions are made in a collaborate way.

Conclusion

A multidisciplinary team without differences is a contradiction in terms. A multidimensional way to view the patient and to design a treatment plan is the great advantages of the multiprofessional team and its “raison d’etre”. Another advantage of the professional diversity of the team is the possibility it renders the team members to broaden their view on what the origin of the patients symptoms might be. The teamwork may therefore be a very stimulating way to work.

The fact that the team consist of persons from several different kinds of professions is something that in research literature is described to highly affect work performed by the team. The problems that might arise from the professional diversity are what primarily have drawn the attention of researchers.

In this study multiprofessional psychiatric team has been observed during treatment conference discussions. The results suggest team discussions might be influenced by a need for playing down the professional differences in the team and thereby reduce them as cause for conflict. For the multiprofessional psychiatric team to make full use of its professional diversity during treatment conference, a possible way might be to develop their ability to handle disagreement in a collaborative way. To support full use of the diversity in the team, leadership should be exercised in a way that enhances the integration of different perspectives.
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ÄR GRÄSET GRÖNARE I DEN ANDRA GRUPPEN?
STUDENTERS ERFARENHETER AV GRUPPARBETE

Eva Hammar Chiriac & Charlotta Einarsson


I likhet med alla andra pedagogiska metoder har grupparbete, som arbets- och lärandeform, både för- och nackdelar. Ibland kommer grupparbeten att fungera till studenternas belätenhet medan andra gånger leder arbetet till mindre konstruktiva processer (Hammar Chiriac & Hempel, 2005). Om grupparbetet fungerar bra kan “den lilla gruppen” av studenter upplevas som en god miljö för lärande (Hammar Chiriac, in progress) men också för träning av argumentationsteknik och problemlösning (Granström, 2003). Om grupparbete används ofte fungerar det ofta som ett negativt upplevelser, såsom frustration, slöseri med tid etc. I vissa fall kan också studenterna uppleva grupprötthet, vilket är ett relativt nytt fenomen inom gruppforskningen och kan beskrivas som en utmattningsattityd till grupparbete (Jern, Brännström, Einarsson & Hammar Chiriac, 2006; Christensson & Göransson, 2004; Lantz & Gustavsson, 2006).

diskussioner i grupparbetet formulerar och reflekterar över sin egen förståelse samtidigt som den prövas mot kamraternas. För att öka förståelsen av grupparbetets process och funktion har även gruppforskare studerat vilken betydelse faktorer som interaktion, gruppsammansättning, gruppstørrelse, typ av uppgift, tidsaspekt (dvs. gruppen livslängd) grupputveckling, försvarsmekanismer och intergruppsprocesser kan ha för grupparbete (se tabell 1).

Tabell 1
Exempel på faktorer som har studerats för att öka förståelsen av grupparbetets funktion och process kopplat till några referenser.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faktorer som har studerats</th>
<th>Exempel på referenser</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaktion</td>
<td>Einarsson 2003; Einarsson, &amp; Granström, 2002; Jakobsson, 2001; Jern, 2001b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gruppstorlek</td>
<td>Hammar Chiriac, 2003; Sjödin, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typ av uppgift</td>
<td>Hammar Chiriac, 2003; Hammar Chiriac &amp; Hempel, 2005; Sjödin, 1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidsaspekt</td>
<td>Hempel &amp; Jern, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Försvarsmekanismer</td>
<td>Christensen &amp; Johansen, 2002; Granström, 2006; Hammar Chiriac, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergruppsprocesser</td>
<td>Hammar Chiriac, 2003; Jungert, 2005; Wheelan, 2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


En aspekt av forskning om grupparbete i undervisning som lyser med sin frånvaro i tabell 1 och som är näst intill obefintlig är den som intresserar sig för studenters erfarenheter av grupparbete, dvs. den aspekt som fokuseras i föreliggande studie. Oftast får lärare lita på spontana synpunkter och
indikationer på hur studenter upplever grupparbeten via de kursvärderingar som genomförs. Några undantag finns dock. Näslund (2005) visar exempelvis på att studenter poängterar vikten av att (a) samspela i gruppen, (b) visa respekt för varandra i gruppen samt (c) ha god struktur både i gruppen och i arbetet. Underwood (2003) gör gällande att studenternas måttliga entusiasm för grupparbetet påverkas av såväl uppgiften som vilka gruppmedlemmar man ska arbeta tillsammans med. Ett problem som studenterna uppmärksammade i studien var de kamrater som inte bidrog till gruppens arbete, s.k. parasiter. Det framkommer bland annat att studenterna överlag är obästa att straffa de icke-bidragande kamraterna. För att få studenterna positivt inställda till att arbeta i grupp krävs att fördelarna med arbetsformen klargörs samt att de får garantier för att icke produktiva gruppmedlemmar eller s.k. ”parasiter” i grupparbetet inte försätter dem i oynnsam dager. Vaksamma och noggranna lärare är ett och o för att gynnasgrupp arbete ska utvecklas. Några projektarbeten som framkommit under senare år angående studenternas erfarenheter av arbete i grupp (Haglund et al., 2006; Axelsson et al., 2006) tyder på ett visst intresse hos studenterna. Fokus i arbetena är att synliggöra studenters upplevelser av arbetsformen samt hur grupparbete organiseras. Vilket framgår av ovanstående forskningsgenomgång är att mer systematiska studier eller dokumentation av studenters upplevelser och erfarenheter av grupparbete inom utbildning är önskvärda. Föreliggande delstudie är ett steg i den riktningen.

Syfte

Syftet med studien är att fånga studenters egna erfarenheter av att arbeta i grupp i studiesammanhang. Vi vill här fokusera på de studenter som valt utbildningsprogram med en mer traditionell utbildningsdesign där grupparbete kan ingå som arbetsform men inte är den centrala och mest förekommande arbetsformen. I denna rapport kommer följande frågeställningar att belyssas:

1. Vilka positiva erfarenheter har studenter av grupparbete?
2. Vilka negativa erfarenheter har studenter av grupparbete?
3. Hur uppfattar studenter att samarbetet i gruppen fungerar?
4. Hur uppfattar studenter att samarbetat fungerar i andra grupper?

Metod

För att samla information om studenternas erfarenheter konstruerades en semistrukturerad enkät. Enkäten distribuerades till sex olika studentpopulationer fördelade på två olika utbildningsorter och fyra olika utbildningsprogram. Ett viktigt och avgörande kriterium för urval av studentpopulationer var att grupparbete var en central och vanligt förekommande arbetsform i undervisningsdesignen samt att studenterna arbetade i samma
gruppkonstellation under en längre tid, helst under en hel termin. Studenter som läser enligt PBL ingår inte i populationen.

Totalt besvarades enkäten av 210 studenter. Enkäten distribuerades dels genom att vi själva sökte upp studentgrupper i samband med föreläsningar, dels genom att skicka över enkät och information till annan lärare som distribuerade enkäten, dels genom distribution i studenters postfack samt slutligen genom att en student distribuerade enkäten till kurskamrater.

Vi fick gott gensvar bland de studenter vi vände oss till för att få enkäten besvarad. Deras spontana kommentarer var att det var bra och intressant att denna typ av forskning genomförs. Enkäten beräknades ta ca 10 minuter att fylla i men relativt många studenter ägnade mer tid till att besvara den vilket resulterade i fylliga och informativa svar på de frågor som ställdes i enkäten.

Forskningsobjektet i denna studie är av andra ordningens perspektiv, dvs. fokus är på hur människor uppfattar och beskriver fenomen i sin omvärld (Larsson, 1986; Marton, 1988). Vi intresserar oss här alltså för studenternas uppfattningar och erfarenheter om något specifikt, i detta fall om deras upplevelser och tankar kring att arbeta i grupp.

I analysarbetet av materialet har vi strävat efter att finna kvalitativt skilda kategorier med vilkas hjälp olika uppfattningar som finns i det insamlade materialet kan beskrivas. Analyser av insamlad material har gjorts i förhållande till de olika frågeställningar som avses besvaras i denna rapport.

Resultat

Resultaten kommer att presenteras under fyra huvudrubriker som var och en avser att besvara de olika frågeställningar som ligger till grund för själva rapporten. Valet att presentera resultaten på detta sätt leder till att det i viss mån finns överlappning av kategorier eller aspekter som återfinns i de olika resultatpresentationerna men som har lite olika innebörden beroende på i förhållande till vilken frågeställning de avser att besvara. I enkäten efterfrågas studenternas erfarenheter av arbetet i den nuvarande gruppen och inte deras allmänna åsikter eller erfarenheter av att arbeta i grupp.

Positiva erfarenheter av grupparbete

Av enkätsvaren framgår att studenterna överlag har många positiva erfarenheter av att arbeta i grupp. Det är endast en knapp handfull som uppger att de saknar eller har få positiva erfarenheter av att arbeta i sina nuvarande grupper.

Fem olika kategorier som beskriver positiva erfarenheter har identifierats. Dessa kategorier är lärande, tillhörighet, gruppens funktion för individen, struktur för arbetet samt bidrag och tid. Nedan kommer var och en av de fem kategorierna att närmare presenteras.
Lärande

Grupparbete som arbetsform i utbildningssammanhang innebär för studenterna att de lär mer genom utbytet med sina kurskamrater än vad de skulle göra om de enbart arbetade individuellt. Genom att diskutera, ifrågasätta varandra och sig själva samt förtydliga för varandra i diskussioner genereras ett större utbyte av kunskapsstoffet än vad som vanligtvis görs vid individuellt arbete. Studenterna upplever också att de lär genom att lyssna till vad andra har att bidra med. I det lärande som sker i grupparbetet finns inte enbart det ämnesinnehållet som är avsett att bearbetas inom grupparbetets ram utan studenterna beskriver också att de genom arbetsformen får fördjupande kunskaper och erfarenheter om hur grupper fungerar, hur man själv fungerar i grupp och hur andra människor fungerar i grupp. Vikten av att lära sig att samarbeta i grupper såväl för nuvarande studier som för kommande yrkesliv lyfts också fram.

Tillhörighet


Gruppens funktion för individen


Struktur för arbetet

Struktur för arbetet är en ganska mångfacetterad kategori som beskriver arbetet ur flera aspekter. Ett viktigt incitament som lyfts fram i beskrivningarna

Utkristalliserade roller är en annan aspekt av struktur för arbetet som lyfts fram. Klara roller och rollfördelning i grupperna upplevs som underlättande för det arbete som ska genomföras. Studenterna vet vilka förväntningar de har på sig själva och på varandra och vad vars och ens uppgift och bidrag består av. Att följa de avtal och överenskommelser som görs i gruppen upplevs som viktigt och betydelsefullt och något som i hög grad påverkar de positiva erfarenheterna och förutsättningarna för ett gott samarbete. Även att finna samarbetsformer som fungerar för gruppen och de enskilda medlemmarna där de olika medlemmarnas kompetenser tillvaratas är viktigt.

Bidrag och tid

Vid grupparbeten samlas studenterna för att arbeta tillsammans med en oftast av läraren förelagd uppgift. Studenterna lyfter fram att en situation där alla medlemmar i gruppen bidrar i lika utsträckning och har liknande ambitionsnivå för arbetsinsatser och förväntat resultat på arbetet upplevs som positivt. Effektiv användning av tiden, dvs. att ägna sig åt det gemensamma grupparbetet och lämna övriga umgängeformer åt sidan, kan också vara viktigt. Grupparbete kan vara tidskrävande men lyfts ändå fram som positivt då behållningen av arbetet i gruppen upplevs som gott.

Slutsats


Negativa erfarenheter av grupparbete

Även om studenterna upplever många positiva aspekter av att arbeta i grupp, så förekommer också negativa erfarenheter av grupparbete. Flera av de aspekter som redovisas under föregående avsnitt återfinns också under frågan om vilka negativa erfarenheter studenterna har upplevt av arbetet i sin nuvarande grupp.
Först bör dock understrykas att det är en stor grupp av de studenter som ingår i studien som inte haft några negativa upplevelser av att arbeta i sin nuvarande grupp. Sju olika kategorier har identifierats under negativa upplevelser; arbetsform, gruppens sammansättning, gruppklimat, grupprocesser, konflikter, tid samt deltagarnas bidrag. Nedan kommer var och en av de kategorierna att granskas närmare.

**Arbetsform**

Grupparbete i undervisning medför bland annat att man som student tvingas läsa och lära sig till en viss tidpunkt som man inte själv kan styra över. Dessutom tycks det vara svårt att hitta tider och platser för att genomföra själva grupparbetet. Att alla gruppdeltagare inte kommer till gruppmötena (frånvaro) är också en synpunkt som flera studenter tar upp i enkäterna samt att arbetet i gruppen ofta blir ostrukturerat. Att komma dåligt förberedd till ett grupparbete är ytterligare en aspekt som yttrar sig. Otydlig information och dålig handledning är också faktorer som kan medföra negativa upplevelser av arbetsformen.

**Gruppens sammansättning**

Gruppens sammansättning handlar bland annat om huruvida gruppen är heterogent eller homogent sammansatt. Om gruppen är homogen kan det upplevas negativt att endast ett, eller några få, perspektiv kan göra sig gällande i gruppen, exempelvis ”bara det kvinnliga perspektivet”. Om deltagarna är för lika kan det leda till brist på äsikter vilket av flera upplevs som negativt. Om gruppen är heterogent sammansatt så kan olika tanke- och livssyn samt åldersskillnad leda till upplevelsen av att man inte passar ihop i gruppen eller att ”personkemin” inte stämmer överens. Gruppens storlek kan också vara en problematisk aspekt. Såväl för stor som för liten grupp kan upplevas negativt, även om det sistnämnda återkommer i betydligt mindre omfattning. Några studenter anser också att man lär sig mindre i grupp.

**Gruppklimat**

Nära kopplat till gruppens sammansättning är upplevelsen av gruppklimatet i studiegruppen. Här framkommer negativa upplevelser av att man inte hinner lära känna varandra i gruppen och man inte kan få till något samarbete. Andra menar å andra sidan, att gruppens livstid är för lång och att man sliter på vänskapen och påverkas av varandras humör på ett negativt sätt.

**Grupprocesser**

Kategorin grupprocesser är mångfacetterad och många studerande uppger att grupprocesserna ger upphov till negativa upplevelser i arbetet. Processförluster överlag som t ex att man tappar fokus, dålig kommunikation och problem med
"en medlem i gruppen" är negativa erfarenheter som studenterna redovisar från grupparbetet.

**Konflikter**
En annan kategori som lyfts fram av ett stort antal studenter är konflikter. Studenterna upplever bland annat att de har svårt att komma överens och upplever det negativt att behöva kompromissa. Andra sidan av mynten dvs. konflikträdsla upplevs också som negativt men i betydligt mindre omfattning.

**Tid**
Grupparbete kan upplevas som ineffektivt och tidskrävande med tanke på alla långa arbetspass med långvariga diskussioner. Trots detta, eller kanske på grund av detta, så upplever deltagarna ofta tidsbrist och stress i sina grupparbeten.

**Deltagarnas bidrag**
I grupparbete samlas personer med differentierad ambitionsnivå, vilket kan visa sig i olika grader av intresse och engagemang samt i hur mycket ansvar och vilken arbetsbörda man är villig att ta på sig gällande grupparbetet. Skillnader i lär- och kunskapsnivå förekommer också. Dessa olikheter kan, enligt studenternas svar i enkäten, leda till negativa upplevelser av att studenter ger olika bidrag till gruppen och dess arbete. Två andra aspekter som många lyfter fram under negativa händelser av grupparbete är social loafing (gå-och-dra) och att man tar olika stor plats i gruppen. Detta handlar till syvende och sist om hur mycket var och en av medlemmarna i gruppen ska bidra till gruppen och dess arbete.

**Slutsats**
Kategorin negativa upplevelser av grupparbetet i den nuvarande gruppen kan alltså kopplas både till hur grupparbetet organiseras, hur man strukturerar arbetet men även till personliga faktorer, hos både lärare och studenter. Frågan om hur mycket var och en ska bidra med till gruppen och gruppens arbete är nog den kategorin som lärare överlag får höra tals om vid informella utvärderingar men har mycket svårt att kontrollera eller åtgärda. Lojalitet mellan studenterna samt oviljan att skapa konflikt eller svårigheter för en kamrat gör att detta är minst sagt dolt.

**Jämförelse positiva och negativa upplevelser**
Av texten ovan framgår att det finns ett antal aspekter tas upp under både positiva och negativa upplevelser av grupparbetet. Det finns exempelvis studerande som svarar att inte erfart några positiva upplevelser av att arbeta i grupp och vice versa, många studerande som inte haft några negativa upplevelser av att arbetet i studiegruppen. Andra aspekter som uppar sig som
både positiva och negativa upplevelser är (a) lärande, (b) gruppsammanfattning, (c) tid och (d) förberedelser.

**Uppfattning om hur den egna gruppen fungerar**

I syftet framgår också att vi ville fånga studenternas uppfattningar och upplevelser av hur arbetet i den egna gruppen fungerar. Flertalet studenter graderade utsagorna med ord som ”dåligt”, ”hyfsat” ”toppen”, ”jätte bra” osv. Vid bearbetning av innehållet i studenternas berättelser identifierades sju olika kategorier. I Tabell 2 illustreras hur innehållet i de olika kategorierna är relaterat till omdömen om hur gruppen fungerar.

Tabell 2

*Studenters beskrivningar av hur den egna gruppen fungerar*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kategori</th>
<th>Dåligt</th>
<th>Hyfsat</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>Bra</th>
<th>Mycket bra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Struktur i gruppen</strong></td>
<td>Saknar struktur</td>
<td>Har en struktur</td>
<td>Tydlig struktur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gruppens sammanfattning</strong></td>
<td>För liten grupp</td>
<td>Heterogen grupp</td>
<td>Homogen/heterogen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deltagarnas bidrag</strong></td>
<td>Olika bidrag</td>
<td>Olika bidrag</td>
<td>Olika ambitionsnivå</td>
<td>Alla bidrar / olika bidrag</td>
<td>Alla bidrar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Konflikter</strong></td>
<td>Det finns konflikter</td>
<td>Det finns konflikter</td>
<td>Inte har konflikter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arbetssätt</strong></td>
<td>Ej hittat fungerande arbetssätt</td>
<td>Alla tar ansvar</td>
<td>Prioriterar annat</td>
<td>Arbetsfördelning Samarbete</td>
<td>Utvecklat arbetsformer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tid</strong></td>
<td>Stressat klimat</td>
<td>Tidskravande</td>
<td>Effektivt</td>
<td>Tolerans/acceptans</td>
<td>Tolerans Trivsel Harmoni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social dimension</strong></td>
<td>Tolerans/acceptans</td>
<td>Tolerans Trivsel</td>
<td>Harmoni</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Av tabellen ovan kan vi se att studenterna beskriver hur den egna gruppen fungerar utifrån kategorierna *struktur i gruppen*, *gruppens sammanfattning*, *deltagarnas bidrag*, *konflikter*, *arbetssätt*, *tid samt social dimension*. Flertalet av kategorierna är relevanta oavsett hur man uppfattar att gruppen fungerar, dock beskrivs kategorierna utifrån lite olika aspekter beroende på hur studenten uppfattar att gruppen fungerar.
Struktur i gruppen har, som vi även tidigare i resultatpresentation sett, en betydelse för upplevelsen av hur gruppen fungerar. Vi kan här utläsa att det är viktigt att ha en tydlig struktur i gruppen för att studenterna ska uppleva att deras grupp fungerar på ett bra eller mycket bra sätt. Avsaknad av struktur leder till en lägre grad av förnöjksamhet med hur gruppen fungerar.


Deltagarnas bidrag förefaller vara en central faktor som påverkar hur studenterna uppfattar att deras grupp fungerar. Grupper som inte uppfattas som väl fungerande karaktäriseras av att deltagarna bidrar i olika utsträckning. Vissa personer i gruppen drar ett stort lass medan andra bidrag är av mer marginell karaktär. Grupper som istället uppfattas väl fungerande kännetecknas oftare av att alla i gruppen bidrar till arbetet men att bidragens karaktär kan se lite olika ut men där vars och ens insats i tid, engagemang och kraft är mer likartad.

Avasknad eller närvaro av konflikter påverkar hur studenterna upplever att deras grupper fungerar. Närvaron av konflikter som inte löses påverkar arbetet negativt med följd att studenterna uppfattar att deras grupp inte fungerar på ett optimalt sätt. Avsaknaden av konflikter förefaller ge förutsättning för upplevelser av en mer väl fungerande grupp.

Ett annat incitament som har betydelse är hur arbetssättet utvecklats i gruppen. Grupper som inte fungerar väl är en orsak till detta att man i gruppen inte har hittat fungerande arbetssätt. Väl fungerande grupper karaktäriseras mer av att man utvecklat fungerande arbetsformer där det finns ett samarbete och en arbetsfördelning.

Tid är en annan faktor som påverkar hur gruppen uppfattas men kanske inte på ett entydigt sätt. Arbetet i gruppen kan uppfattas som tidskrävande samtidigt som arbetet fungerar bra. Det kan tolkas som att en förutsättning för att arbetet ska fungera bra krävs att man avsätter mycket tid tillsammans för att få en väl fungerande grupp. Arbetet kan också upplevas som effektivt då tiden som avsätts utnyttjas för att arbeta med de uppgifter som man avsåg att arbeta med. En mer negativ aspekt av tid och som påverkar upplevelsen av hur gruppen fungerar är att klimatet i gruppen kan känna stressigt vilket i vissa fall kan bero på att gruppen inte avsätter tillräckligt med tid tillsammans och då med följdent att mycket arbete ska hinnas med på kort tid.

Slutligen har studenterna även identifierat en social dimension som väsentlig för hur gruppen uppfattas fungera. Denna kategori lyfts emellertid endast fram i förhållande till väl fungerande grupper där aspekter som tolerans, acceptans, trivsel och harmoni lyfts fram. Det förefaller alltså som om grupper som fungerar väl kan karaktäriseras av att individerna respekterar varandra och där klimatet är harmoniskt.
**Slutsats**
Det finns inom hela den undersökta populationen olika uppfattningar om hur den egna arbetsgruppen fungerar. Många har uppfattningen att arbetet fungerar bra i gruppen medan andra har uppfattningen att det inte fungerar så väl. Sammantaget kan konstateras att incitament för att studenterna ska uppfatta att gruppen fungerar väl är att gruppen har utvecklat en struktur för sitt arbete där alla bidrar och där samarbetsförmågan har utvecklats. Vidare skapar avsaknad av konflikter respektive tolerans och acceptans för varandra goda grunder för att gruppen ska fungera väl.

**Uppfattningen av hur andra grupper inom kursen fungerar**
En av frågorna handlar om hur studenterna uppfattar att andra grupper inom kursgruppen fungerar. Det största antalet av de studenter som svarat på enkäten, cirka en tredjedel, har ingen uppfattning om hur de andra grupperna fungerar. Därutöver finns en variation i hur man funderar kring den egna gruppen i förhållande till de andra grupperna i kursgruppen. I tabell 3 sammanfattas hur studenterna uppfattar de andra grupperna.
Tabell 3

**Uppfattning om de andra grupperna och exempel på hur respektive uppfattning beskrivs av de studerande.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uppfattning om andra grupper</th>
<th>Exempel på citat hämtade från enkäterna.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Bra, bättre än vår grupp** | Bara att de flesta verkar fungera bra, sammansvetsade i arbetet.  
Tycker att många grupper verkar fungera bra fast på olika sätt.  
En del är säkert bättre.  
Bra.  
Bra överlag.  
Bra, verkar inte förekomma så många konflikter. |
| **På samma sätt som vår grupp** | De fungerar väl som våran.  
De fungerar nog på samma sätt som vår.  
På samma sätt.  
på ett liknande sätt. |
| **Dåligt, sämre än vår grupp** | Jag tror att vi är en av de bättre fungerande grupperna.  
Vet att visa grupper inte alls fungerar.  
Det är nog inte många som fungerar så bra som vår grupp gör.  
En hel del konflikter har jag hört.  
Min grupp fungerar nog lite bättre än vissa av de andra.  
Sämre än våran. |
| **Bra och dåligt** | Mycket olika beroende på ambitionsnivå och hur väl de kommer överens.  
Väldigt olika men ingen verkar problemfri.  
Det är nog väldigt olika.  
Några bra, några dåligt.  
En del sämre än del bättre. |

Tabellen illustrerar att de andra grupperna beskrivs via fyra olika graderingar. (a) bra, (b) ungefär som den egna gruppen, (c) dåligt eller (d) både och. Knappt en fjärdedel av de studenter som svarat på enkäten uppger att andra grupper fungerar bra eller till och med bättre än den egna gruppen. Vidare rör sig flera svar om att andra grupper fungerar ungefär på samma sätt som den egna gruppen. Lika många studenter förmodar att andra grupper fungera dåligt eller sämre än vad den egna gruppen gör. Som nämnts ovan har den flesta studenterna ingen åsikt om de andra grupperna. Ett annat frekvent förekommande svar är att andra grupper kan fungera både bra och dåligt, vilket också kan variera mellan grupper och tillfällen.

**Slutsats**

Det är många studenter som inte har någon uppfattning om hur de andra grupperna fungerar. De tror att övriga grupper fungerar ungefär som den egna
Diskussion
Flertalet studenter uppger att de har goda erfarenheter av arbetet i sin nuvarande grupp vilket framkommer i deras beskrivningar av positiva erfarenheter och uppfattningar om hur den egna gruppen fungerar. Även i de grupper där arbetet fungerar bra finns självklart också negativa erfarenheter. Det är dock ett stort antal studenter som uttryckligen uppgivet att de inte har några negativa erfarenheter alls av arbetet i den nuvarande gruppen. Vi har utifrån studenternas berättelser kunna utläsa att grupparbetet fyller en viktig funktion för dem ur såväl lärandesynpunkt som ur studiesocialt perspektiv. Grupparbete ur lärandesynpunkt fungerar för studenterna både som mål dvs. att lära sig att arbeta i grupp inför kommande yrkesliv, och som medel dvs. som bas för kunskapsinhämtning vilket också ofta kan vara en intention med grupparbete (Granström, 2003; Underwood, 2003).

Det framgår också att det väl fungerande grupparbetet inte är en självklarhet och vi har kunnat identifiera ett antal kritiska punkter som studenterna upplever som betydelsefulla för att grupparbetet ska kunna fungera. Bland de kritiska punkterna framkommer bl.a. att det är viktigt att (a) gruppen hittar en struktur för arbetet där arbetsformer blir tydliga, (b) överenskommelser görs och (c) tydliga rollfördelningar utkristalliseras i grupperna. Vidare framkommer att viktiga förutsättningar för goda erfarenheter av samarbetet i gruppen är att alla (d) deltagare i gruppen bidrar och att (e) konflikter som uppstår i grupperna måste lösas för att arbetet ska kunna fortsätta i en positiv anda (Hammar Chiriac & Hempel, 2005). Studenternas egna berättelser tyder på att grupparbete som arbetsform kan vara givande men samtidigt måste flera förutsättningar uppfyllas för att det ska fungera på ett bra sätt. I likhet med resultat från tidigare forskning (Ashman & Gilles, 1997; Fawcett & Garton, 2005) har vi i denna studie kunnat se att grupparbete som arbetsform inte fungerar per automatik utan måste övas på. Vi har här kunnat lyfta fram några viktiga aspekter att beakta för att öka möjligheterna för ett gott samarbete i grupper.

De faktorer som framkommit i resultaten som hindrande eller stödjade för gruppernas arbeten är i viss mån sådana faktorer som vi lärare tillsammans med studenterna aktivt kan arbeta med för att skapa goda förutsättningar för deras kommande grupparbeten (Hammar Chiriac & Hempel, 2005). Exempelvis kan vi som lärare i våra anvisningar och konstruktioner av arbetsuppgifter till grupperna vara tydliga med hur de enskilda gruppmedlemmarnas arbetsinsatser ska tydliggöras och bedömas för att motverka tendenser till att vissa studenter bidrar mindre, eller inta alls, i gruppens arbete. Vi kan som lärare hjälpa studenterna med att skapa överenskommelser, så kallade gruppkontrakt (Hempel, 2005), där de tillsammans diskuterar igenom och bestämmer hur
arbetsmöten ska se ut, vad som förväntas i prestationer av de olika medlemmarna, vem som tar ansvar för vad etc.

Gruppens sammansättning är också en variabel som vi som lärare aktivt kan arbeta med. Bland de grupper som deltog i vår studie var flertalet sammansatta av lärare och byggde alltså inte på egen val bland studenterna. Vid sammansättning av grupper kan t ex hänsyn tas till att försöka få en så varierad ålders och könsfördelning som möjligt. Det kan emellertid samtidigt vara viktigt att förhålla sig till den gruppsammansättning som kan vara bäst för den uppgift som ska lösas.


I resultaten framkommer att studenterna har relativt få uppfattningar om hur andra grupper inom kursen fungerar. I de fall de ger uttryck för uppfattningar om andra grupper görs det huvudsakligen med en gradering av hur den andra gruppen fungerar i förhållande till den egna med utsagor som ”bättre än oss”, ”sämre än oss” eller ”som oss”. Jämförelser mot andra grupper kan få så väl positiva som negativa konsekvenser för arbetet i den egna gruppen (Jungert, 2005). Resultaten kan tolkas som att studenterna verkar ha en ganska realistisk bild över hur andra grupper fungerar. Man försöker inte skapa en negativ bild av andra grupper för att försköna bilden av sig själv vilket kan vara en vanlig tendens i många organisationer (Wheelan, 2005). Det tycks heller inte finnas tendenser till att skönmåla andra grupper eller uttrycka önskemål om att få ingå i dessa ideala grupper. Det förefaller alltså som om studenterna uppfattar gräset som grönare eller mera sönderbränt på andra sidan.

Referenser


AMBITIONER SOM INTE ÖVERRENSSTÄMMER - EN STUDIE KRING ELEVERS GRUPPARBETEN

Karin Forslund Frykedal

Inledning


Syftet med texten är att beskriva olika tillvägagångssätt som skapas bland elever när de grupperar och hur det kan tolkas med hjälp av symbolisk interaktionism. Tillvägagångssätten tar sin utgångspunkt i att elevernas ambition med arbetet skiljer sig åt vilket skapar en ambitionsdifferens som i sin tur påverkar hur tillvägagångssätten uttrycks.

Analytiska utgångspunkter


Att försöka förstå hur andra tolkar och får mening i sin omgivning är långt från oproblematiskt och därför blir det också viktigt att vara medveten om den egna rollen som medskapare i den analys som växer fram och där det studerade fenomenet finns i fokus (Charmaz, 2005, 2006: Atkinson & Housley, 2003). Det som ses och hörs av observatören är beroende av (påverkas av) tidigare
tolkningar, erfarenheter och intressen men också relationen med miljön och de som studeras där. Där har jag med mig lång erfarenhet av läraryrket och det är med den historien analysen har tagit form.

Med en interaktionistisk tolkningsram och med utgångspunkt i Blumers premisser, ses tolkningsprocessen hos en elev som medskapare av de egna handlingarna och bidrar med hur han eller hon uppfattat situationen. För att agera måste också eleven identifiera vad han/hon vill, kartlägga beteenden, notera och tolka andras ageranden, bedöma situationen, kontrollera sig själv i stunden, funadera vad som ska göras och sporra sig själv genom motsträviga miljöer (Blumer, 1969)


**Symbolisk interaktionism applicerad på grupparbete**

Sociala organisationer som skola är enligt symbolisk interaktionism (Blumer, 1969) sociala konstruktioner i vilka eleverna skapar och utvecklar sina handlingar. Strukturer i organisationerna, som dess kultur, sociala system och olika roller som skapas där, sätter villkor för deras handlingar men de bestämmer dem inte utan det gör eleven själv i sitt agerande. Det är inte heller gentemot kulturen, systemen eller rollerna i sig som de agerar utan det är, enligt
Blumer, gentemot situationer och andra elevers ageranden som de ställs inför i skolan.

Utifrån det synsättet skulle även arbetsmetoden ”grupparbeten” kunna ses som socialt konstruerat och sätta villkor för elevers agerande. I det perspektivet skulle elevernas beteenden kunna förstås och förklaras utifrån den förförståelse och historia som innebörden av arbetsmetoden har för dem. Vilket innebär att tidigare arbeten i grupp påverkar både deras beteende och tankar om metoden som de tar med sig in i ett arbete, vilket är med och påverkar andras beteenden eftersom de i sin tur styr sitt handlande utifrån hur de tolkar andras agerande i situationen. Ageranden i olika situationer i grupparbeten skulle utifrån det ha verkan på hur de tolkar situationen och därmed också på agerandet för stunden. Även rådande normer för hur grupparbete ska genomföras är med och påverkar elevers ageranden i grupparbetet.


**Ambitionsdifferens med olika tillvägagångssätt**


När elever möts för att tillsammans göra en uppgift i ett grupparbete så skapas olika föreställningar kring vilka viljeinriktningar och angelägenheter som styr arbetet, vilka föreställningar om grupparbete var och en har och hur beteendet i grupparbetet blir. Olikheterna blir tydliga för eleverna när de kommer samman i grupparbetet och interagerar både frivilligt och i en mer påtvungad interaktion. I de interactionerna blir de på olika sätt berörda av varandras föreställningar, förmågor och personligheter vilket då också tydliggör olikheterna. Dessa olikheter som möts är med och skapar de skilda ambitionerna inför arbetet som blir utgångspunkten för den ambitionsdifferens som uppstår. Allt detta sker för det mesta implicit hos varje elev och de handlingar som växer fram skapar olika tillvägagångssätt där varje elev blir både skapare och medskapare av de egna och andras tillvägagångssätt.
Fenomenet ambitionsdifferens kan därför beskrivas som något som uppstår när eleverna interagerar med varandra och samtidigt utvecklar olika intressen och tillvägagångssätt i grupparbetet som inte är överensstämmande.

Olika tillvägagångssätt som blir till i interaktionen mellan eleverna


Tillvägagångssätten som uppstår, förhandlas och tilldelas under arbetet i grupp skiftar under arbetsprocessens gång både hos den enskilde eleven och är också beroende av hur interaktionen mellan eleverna utvecklas. Fem olika varianter har synliggjorts och jag har kallat dem dirigerande, sporrande, assisterande, gömmande och hitchhikande.

Tillvägagångssättet skapas i de skiftande ambitionerna som eleverna utvecklar i interaktionen med varandra i grupparbetet och olika uttryck synliggörs i arbetet. Dimensionerna i varje uttryck har givit ett mönster som i sin tur blir dimensionerna i de olika tillvägagångssätten. I interaktionen mellan eleverna där arbetsprocessen vid arbetet i grupp pågår blir detta mönster uppenbart. Processerna är som nämndes innan oftast implicita och inte medvetandegjorda hos dem de berör. Därför är vanligen inte eleverna medvetna om det de skapar och som påverkar dem i deras arbeten, även om det som synes längre ner i texten, finns undantag där några av eleverna visar sig väl medvetna om en del av sitt agerande i grupparbetet.

De mönster som fångar upp och beskriver tillvägagångssätt och uttryck vid arbete i grupp synliggörs grafiskt i tabellen. Efter tabellen begreppsliggörs de fem olika tillvägagångssätten.
Tabell 1
Tillvägagångssätt och uttryck vid arbete i grupp

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tillvägagångssätt</th>
<th>Dirigerande</th>
<th>Sporrande</th>
<th>Assisterande</th>
<th>Gömmande</th>
<th>Hitchhikande</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uttryck</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vilje-inriktningar</strong></td>
<td>Göra individuella arbeten inom det gemensamma</td>
<td>Sporra övriga i grupparbetet och möjliggöra drift av det egna projektet</td>
<td>Göra sitt bästa i det gemensamma arbetet</td>
<td>Osynliggöra sina svagheter</td>
<td>Göra så lite arbete som möjligt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Angelägenheter</strong></td>
<td>Säkerställa höga betyg</td>
<td>Skapa gott samarbete</td>
<td>Att arbetet flyter på utan störningar</td>
<td>Fly från sin egen osäkerhet</td>
<td>Göra annat än att arbeta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationer med kamrater</strong></td>
<td>Simultant arbete</td>
<td>Fritidssnacka</td>
<td>Intima relationer</td>
<td>Fataliga förtroliga kamratrelationer</td>
<td>Låtsas slåss Skoja bräka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Föreställningar om grupparbetet</strong></td>
<td>Börda</td>
<td>Möjlighet</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>Osäkerhet</td>
<td>Bekvämt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beteende i grupparbetet</strong></td>
<td>Dirigera</td>
<td>Supporta</td>
<td>Assistera</td>
<td>Resignera</td>
<td>Lifta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Av tabellen framgår olika tillvägagångssätt som uttrycks med hjälp av olika uttryck som viljeinriktningar, angelägenheter, relationer med kamrater, föreställningar om grupparbetet samt beteende i grupparbetet.

**Dirigerande**

*Dirigerande* tillvägagångssätt i grupparbetet uttrycks av eleverna när styrning och kontroll över det gemensamma arbetet blir viktigt. Det kan exempelvis ske, som Jon uttalar sig om, genom att ”någon tar tag i det” och navigera både uppgift och grupp vid arbetet.

Det är oftast någon som tar tag i det liksom och säger att nu delar vi upp det så att alla har saker som man måste göra. /…/ Det finns några individer i klassen med bra ledaregenskaper och de hamnar oftast i de olika grupperna så de kan liksom ta tag i det. De måste finnas, annars så sitter alla där och väntar på att det ska hända något eller så kanske några gör samma uppgift och så tar det längre tid.

Tillvägagångssättet understöds oftast av de övriga i gruppen som verkar se fördelarna i att det är någon som styr och har kontroll över arbetet. Ibland uppstår det protester om det är andra viljeinriktningar som vill ta plats men det löses ofta genom att det sker en uppdelning av den gemensamma uppgiften till
ett antal individuella. Där varje elev arbetar med sin del av arbetet tills det är dags att sammanställa till en gemensam arbetsprodukt.


Jag är nog den som då håller i alla trådarna. Ser till att det blir ett resultat, och att inte alla flippar ur så att det inte blir någonting. Sen är det ganska bra för dom andra, att den kan fråga om dom är klara, vad dom ska göra för någonting. Jag tror att det är ganska bra om det är någon som är ledare, för om det inte finns någon som tar det ansvaret så vet ju ingen vad dom ska göra.

När någon eller några av eleverna använder det dirigerande tillvägagångssättet kan det alltså hjälpa till med att få strukturen över hur arbetsmaterialet ska fördelas bland gruppdeltagarna och hur arbetet ska utföras. Det händer ofta ofta att eleverna fördelar sidorna i läroboken mellan sig istället för att tillsammans försöka bearbeta och sammanställa textens innehåll, vilket de ofta anser skulle ta alldeles för lång tid och inte vara värt besväret. När sidorna ska fördelas är ett styrande tillvägagångssätt till hjälp. Att styra över hur arbetet utförs blir också viktigt vilket synliggörs när Jannica fortsätter sitt uttalande ”så då kan jag säga att det är det här som saknas och att det här behöver förbättras och att det här kan du göra”.

Dirigerandet görs på olika sätt som via uppmaningar, vädjan och hot vilket Jon visar när han ber Tom om att han ska skriva ytterligare en artikel. ”Vi ska skriva en artikel var till, en kort, för att gruppen ska ha många artiklar”. Varpå Tom svarar ”Varför då”? Och därefter säger Jon ”Du är så lat, om du inte skriver ska du jobba med so och antikens Grekland”. Toms svar blir ”Okej då, jag försöker”. .ppmaningar, inte fick Tom att skriva ytterligare en artikel trots att han lovat att försöka vända sig för några saker. När Jons försök att uppmana Tom att skriva en till artikel inte hjälper tar han till ett hot istället, trots det gör Tom honom inte till viljes (fast han säger Okey då) utan han väljer istället att gå till en annan grupp och inleda ett samtal med några där.

Eftersom Jon inte fick Tom att skriva ytterligare en artikel trots att han lovat att försöka vända sig till Per istället med en vädjan ”Per, kan inte du skriva en artikel till?” Per svarar ”Vad ska jag skriva om då? Responsen från Jon blir ”Inte vet jag, skriv någonting!” Just i den här händelsen var det viktigt för Jon
att ytterligare en artikel skrevs för att gruppen skulle ha många artiklar, samtidigt som några av hans kamrater i gruppen inte arbetade som han tyckte på ett tillfredsställande sätt. Därför använde han utifrån händelserna i gruppen tillvägagångssättet dirigerande för att få dem att inte smita från arbetet och utan istället bidra ytterligare till det gemensamma arbetet.

Som synes är det av värde att få en god kvalité på arbetet och därför läggs stor vikt vid att det gemensamma arbetet håller hög standard och kan få ett högt betyg i bedömningen vilket inte alltid är så lätt som Nilla något missnöjt kommenterar med ”Om några vill ha mvg och några vill ha g så är det väldigt svårt att få det att gå ihop. Dom som tar mindre ansvar, dom satsar på g och då är dom nöjda med det och då kan det vara ganska svårt att samarbeta”. Som synes är det inte alltid så lätt att styra de andra och det tar både kraft och kräver mycket genom att det innebär drivande av två projekt, både det individuella och gruppens gemensamma. Därför är föreställningen om grupparbete i tillvägagångssättet att det är en börda och kräver mycket ansträngning och tid från den individuella arbetsinsatsen vilket Lisa vittnar om.


Nilla uttrycker också att hon ibland tycker att grupparbetet är en börda: ”Jag tycker det är jobbigt ibland när folk har olika ambition till saker och ting”. Det innebär att det blir en extra påfrestning och en belastning att använda den arbetsmetoden i jämförelse med andra mer individuella metoder. Belastningen ökar därför att det gemensamma ansvaret kan leda till en ansvarsdiffusion som gör att ansvaret fördelas ojämnt och en del tar mindre och en del tar större del av det.

Mesta tiden ägnas till arbete på det individuella och gemensamma arbetet och därför finns lite tid över till relationer med gruppmedlemmarna. När någon form av relationer till kamrater ändå skapas, sker det samtidigt och simultant med arbetet.

Sporrande

Ytterligare tillvägagångssätt som utvecklas i grupparbetet är ett som jag valt att benämna sporrande. I det tillvägagångssättet blir det viktigt att stödja och uppmuntra kamraterna i gruppen. Det är angeläget, precis som med det dirigerande tillvägagångssättet, att göra ett bra gemensamt arbete i gruppen men där var och en tar ansvar över sin del. Om man lyckas med de föresatserna kan
det i interaktionen mellan kamraterna möjliggöra en egen fördjupning av det som uppfattas vara intressant i arbetet. Även i det här tillvägagångssättet finns en ledande funktion och ett ansvar över att det gemensamma arbetet fördelas mellan kamraterna och där det också är viktigt att alla tar ansvar. Kontrollbehovet är emellertid inte lika stort utan det finns en större tillit över att kamraterna i gruppen tar ansvar till sin del i arbetet. Till det behövs en viss ”sporrning” som hjälper till i arbetsprocessen, något som också är specifikt: ”Jag hjälper nog till genom att lyfta dom som ligger lite under och försöker hjälpa dom med idéer och sperra dom och så där” som Anders uttrycker det när han ska berätta vad han bidrar med vid arbetet i grupp. Den insatsen kan säkerligen hjälpa många i arbetet och är också ett uppskattat inslag, att få feedback på sin insats både på prestation och på produkt. Andra drag i tillvägagångssättet är att göra det möjligt för alla att komma till tal och bidra med sin del samt även komma med idéer hur arbetet ska kunna genomföras.

Att ha ett sporrande tillvägagångssätt kan uttryckas på olika sätt, som att uppmuntra sina kamrater genom beröm eller att ge respons på arbetet vilket Oscar gör när Krister är klar med ett cirkeldiagram som han konstruerat i en gemensam matteuppgift.

Krister går till Oscar med sitt färdiga diagram och visar fram. Oscar säger ”snyggt” på ett berömmande sätt, Krister går nöjt och sätter sig på sin plats igen. Hans diagram har ”klarat” sig igenom en hård bedömning och samtidigt också fått positivt utlåtande. (Observationsanteckningar)

Att få respons är viktigt i arbetet men det är inte så ofta responsen också ges med beröm utan de flesta gånger blir det endast en kommentar. I tillvägagångssättet sporrande finns följaktligen en vilja att hjälpa andra och att få så många som möjligt med i arbetet. Men det är inte den enda vinningen med att handla på det sättet. Tanken kring att om alla tar sitt ansvar och gör sin del av arbetet möjliggörs fördjupning av det som är av intresse i arbetet finns också med, vilket Oscar visar.

Vad som är lätt i att arbeta i grupp är att det går mycket enklare. Man behöver inte göra allting själv utan man kan avlasta varandra och så får man möjlighet att arbeta med sitt eget. Man kan lära sig mycket mer om ett speciellt område som man arbetar med än om man var tvungen att göra allt själv. Man kan liksom fokusera på sitt eget och få in djupare information och få större förståelse på det sättet.

Att uppfatta grupparbete som en möjlighet som Oscar uttalar, genom att det då ges tillfälle att ”få fokusera på sitt eget” under förutsättning att de andra tar sitt ansvar finns som föreställning i tillvägagångssättet. I jämförelse med andra metoder så finns det också många andra fördelar som bör utnyttjas. Fördelar som att få andra infällsvinklar och perspektiv på ett område och eftersom det är flera kring arbetet, kunna ägna sig åt en del som upplevs som mer intressant.
Att ”sporra” i arbetet kan också ske genom en uppmaning till samarbete och/ eller diskussion kring arbetet via en fråga eller genom att visa sin okunskap och bjuda in till hjälp. Hur det kan gå till visar följande dialog där Tony och inbjuder till konversation kring ett ämne som han vill ha diskuterat genom att fråga: ”Beskriv hur en förnäm mans liv ser ut”? Aannelie är med på noterna och kontrar med ”Det låter helmbbat men kanske skatterna har någonting med det att göra”. Varpå hon vänder sig till Tony som fortfarande inte är riktigt på det klara med hur han ska angripa frågan och säger därför; ”Alltså jag kan inte de här, de är skitsvårt”. Samuel, som har hört deras utsagor och verkar vilja hjälpa till, lägger sig i diskussionen och säger ”Ja men titta på sidan 171”. Varpå Tony läser ett kort ögonblick och svarar ”Feta oxar, är det livet det”? Samuel replikerar ”Ja men läs”! Tony läser vidare men har upptäckt ett ord som han inte förstår och frågar ”Ja, men det finns väl ingen art som heter anka”? Här har Tony genom sin inledningsfråga öppnat upp för en diskussion kring innehållet i en uppgift som sporrar de andra att vara med.

Det blir viktigt att under arbetets gång umgås med sina kamrater och på så vis underhålla relationerna. Därför blandas arbete och umgänge i grupparbetsprocessen. Umgången består mycket av ”fritidssnack” kring vad som händer på tiden som spenderas utanför skolan. Det gör eleverna gör vid sidan av, tillsammans med eller istället för arbetsuppgiften. Innehållet i samtalen är inte direkt relaterat till arbetet de håller på med men många gånger kan de glida mellan arbetsprat och fritidsprat där det de pratar om tangerar eller förhåller sig till arbetet i någon form.

Assisterande

Det tredje tillvägagångssättet, som jag har benämnt assisterande, är precis som framkommer i benämningen, ett sätt att assistera och bistå vid arbetet i grupp genom att t ex fråga vad som ska göras för att ”ta på sig” jobb. Karaktäristiskt i tillvägagångssättet är att hjälpva till där det behövs och vara beredd om någon frågar om hjälp med antingen uppgiften eller någonting runt omkring uppgiften. Däremot är det sällan som ansvaret över att driva och leda det gemensamma arbetet tas utan någon annan får gärna styra men många som Elias säger ”Sen så kan man ha någon, inte någon som leder hela projektet men man ska helst ha någon som bestämmer hur det ska se ut mot slutet”. Vilket Elias visar i sitt uttalande har inte tillvägagångssättet en ledande funktion i samarbetet utan blir mer en ”hjälpreda” till den som styr och utför åtaganden som synliggörs och behöver göras i det gemensamma arbetet. Att assistera blir ett relativt ”inkännande” beteende som invänder andras handlande och styrs av detta genom att följa ”order” som sedan utförs. Det kan även vara andras behov av hjälp med något i arbetet som skapar ett agerande. Det är däremot svårare att ta egna initiativ. Gentemot dem som inte tar vad som upp fattas som tillräckligt stort ansvar visas ofta en irritation och ett försök att få dem att arbeta mer men den
ansträngningen har inte lika stor genomslagskraft som när det kommer från ett dirigerande eller sporrande tillvägagångssätt.
Föreställningen hos den som tar eller tilldelas tillvägagångssättet är ambivalent genom att det kan upplevas vara en utvecklingsmöjlighet för arbetet, att det höjer kvalitén men beroende på kontexten och situationen behöver det inte alltid vara så utan det kan istället vara ottryggt att arbeta i grupp. Hur viktigt det är att vara bra kamrater och på så sätt vara trygg när man jobbar berättar Frida om.

Det viktiga är att man känner varandra, man behöver inte vara bästa kompisar men man ska i alla fall känna varandra på sått och vis så att man vet hur den andra personen är. För känner man inte varandra så kan det bli väldigt svårt. Om man känner varandra bättre så vet man vem man ska fråga vid olika situationer och vem man ska gå till i olika situationer när man behöver komma vidare eller om man har stannat någonstans i arbetet och känner man då vara bra så går det otroligt mycket snabbare. Alla vet då vad man ska göra och man behöver inte sätta upp regler för vem som ska göra vad.

Arbetet i grupp kan vara en möjlighet men behöver inte vara det eftersom det är beroende på hur interaktionen ser ut och vilka som ingår i den, därför den ambivalenta hållningen. Det kan vara en möjlighet om alla tar ansvar och "drar sitt strå till stacken" som Jannica säger, vilket innebär att arbetet flyter på och medlemmarna i gruppen blir tillgängar.

Vikten av att ha och skapa goda relationer med gruppmedlemmarna, framförallt med dem som redan ingår i vänskapskretsen är stor. Därför är interaktion med kamrater flitig och det görs ofta genom närhet och fysiskt kontakt. Vara intim med varandra genom att ge ömhetsbetygelser och vara kärvänliga på olika sätt är ett förfarande i det här tillvägagångssättet. Det är nästan uteslutande flickor som ses ge varandra ömhetsbetygelser och de gör det genom att i klassrummet sitta intill varandra och t ex göra frisyrer, massera någons skuldror eller prova varandas accessoarer. De gör det vid sidan av, tillsammans med eller istället för arbetsuppgiften.

Betydelsen av goda relationer och att interaktionen i gruppen präglas av god stämning poängteras vilket Jonna ger uttryck för: "Det är viktigt att dom är glada så då blir man ju glad men om dom är sura hela tiden då är det inte lika kul". Det uppstår lätt en osäkerhet om man inte känner varandra eller om den egna prestationen skiljer sig i förhållande till de andras vilket kan spåras i Jonnas fortsatta uttalanden:

Jag känner mig osäker ibland när man jobbar tillsammans med sådana som är jättebra och jättesnabba och så är man kanske långsammare då känner man att man kanske inte gör lika mycket men man gör sitt bästa och så är dom mycket snabbare och så. Eller om dom är långsammare och så är man snabbare och då får man göra mer och då känner jag mig osäker för då tänker jag att vi kanske inte kommer att hinna med arbete och då kommer det att gå dåligt. /.../ Tillsammans med dom snabba så kan man känna sig
långsam och så känns det som om dom tror att man inte gör sitt bästa och då kanske dom klagar så mycket.

Pendlingen mellan å ena sidan tycka det är viktigt att det är god stämning i gruppen och en osäkerhet vid jämförelse med andra som är långsammare eller snabbare är med och bidrar till den ambivalenta hållningen som finns i tillvägagångssättet.

Gömmande

Gömmande är det fjärde tillvägagångssättet i vilken det genomgående finns en osäkerhetskänsla i agerandet både vad gäller prestationen i det gemensamma arbetet men även i relationerna med andra i gruppen. Den upplevda osäkerheten i arbetet tar sig uttryck kring att det är svårt att förstå vad som ska göras och det är även svårt att fråga andra eftersom det inte alltid finns något att fråga om. Även om uppgiften förstås kan det finnas svårigheter att söka efter och hitta faktor som hjälper till att bygga upp innehållet i uppgiften. Det kan också vara svårt att uttrycka sig språkligt, både muntligt och skriftligt. Känslan av dessa svårigheter uttrycker Hans så här;

Om det är något man inte vet vad man ska göra eller det är något ämne som man inte har hängt med i alls och så ska man helt plötsligt göra ett stort temaarbete av det. Om man då alltså inte har fattat så mycket av hela arbetet som man håller på med. Då är det inte så lätt att veta vad man ska göra. Det är väl då man känner sig osäker. Det händer ibland och då försöker man kolla först vad man ska göra och så om man inte fattar det så blir det (arbetet, min anmärkning) typ inte av. Man försöker ju förstå alltså men det är ju inte alltid så lätt.

Vid sådana tillfällen är det lättare att hålla sig undan arbetet, både det egna och det gemensamma genom att helt enkelt vägra utföra ett arbetsmoment vilket Kim gör i följande situation från arbetet med Egypten på Faraonernas tid. Gruppen är i slutet på arbetet och ska börja göra sig redo för att presentera sitt arbete.

Kim: Jag tänker inte gå fram och presentera för klassen.
Kenneth: Inte jag heller.
Kim: Jag fattar inte det här, att de håller på med det här.

Kim vill inte alls gå fram och presentera inför klassen och läraren föreslår att hon ska berätta för henne först och sedan inför hela gruppen. Läraren berättar också att även hon tyckte det var hemskt att presentera inför klassen när hon gick på högstadiet men hon säger också att man måste träna för att inte tycka att det är hemskt längre.

Läraren: Hur tycker du att vi skulle gör då?
Kim: Skita i det här.
Anna: Jag tycker du ska vara med
Kim: Jag tänker inte vara med.
Oscar: Varför ska du inte vara med?
Kim: Jag vill inte.
Oscar: Jag tycker i alla fall att du ska försöka.
Kim: Nej, jag tänker inte.
Därefter går Kim ut ur klassrummet.

Ska man försöka hålla sig undan i ett grupparbete eftersom osäkerheten på det egna arbetet är för stort är det också lätt att avståndet till kamraterna blir stort eftersom det inte är lätt att visa sin osäkerhet och fråga efter hjälp. Avståndet till kamraterna kan också förstärkas av att den osäkra attityden oftast tar sig uttryck i att vara oförskämd mot andra. I det dubbla avståndstagandet från både arbetet och kamraterna blir flyken till datorn och olika webbsjöter tydlig där tiden ägnas åt att exempelvis surfa på nätet. Denna flykt har i första hand med osäkerhet i både prestationen och relation att göra genom att inte förstå eller kunna genomföra det som åläggs. Det är inte alltid det blir flykt från kamrater utan det kan även skapas några få men förtroliga kamratrelationer som när Kenneth på ett förtroendeinbjudande sätt vänder sig till Kim, som just kommit tillbaka in till klassrummet, och säger till henne. ”Du kan väl läsa en mening”? Varpå Kim svarar ”Jag brukar aldrig kunna stå inför en grupp och prata”.

Osäkerheten gör det viktigt att få god respons på det arbete som skapas. Hur det kan uttryckas visar Jon och Per i det fortsatta jobbet med skrivande av ytterligare en artikel och där Jon lyckats få Per att göra det. Per som är angelägen om att få respons på sin artikel och söker därför upp Jon i slutet på lektionen och frågar honom ”Jon, vad tycker du”? Jon läser och säger berömmande ”det är bra!” Med den uppmuntrande kommentaren går Per, som det ser ut, nöjd och sätter sig tillbaka på sin plats innan det är dags att avsluta lektionen.

**Hitchhikande**

Att inte vara motiverad till att arbeta utan istället fly bort i samtal eller andra former av interaktion med kamrater handlar det femte och sista tillvägagångssättet som benämnits *hitchhikande* och uttrycks i att lifta med och åka snällskjuts i det gemensamma arbetet. Det är angeläget att ha så lite arbete som möjligt att göra, vilket är möjligt i grupparbeten eftersom där finns andra som tar hand om det gemensamma arbetet. Det är en flykt från arbete för att ägna sig åt annat vilket hos eleverna är viktigt emellanåt för att ”vila upp” och hämta lite kraft till fortsatt arbete. Flykttiden ägnas åt annat som att ha en ”lekfull” stund tillsammans med andra som också låter andra sköta arbetet. Det sker framför allt på väg till eller ifrån arbetsplatserna, då två eller flera pojkar
(för i den här relationen till kamrater är det alltid pojkar) möts och då antingen boxar på varandra, tar tag i varandra och försöker få den andra ur balans eller helt enkelt försöker brotta ner varandra. Det sker ofta utan att ljudnivån hos dem höjs och det är under en begränsad tidsperiod; lika fort som det startade kan det sluta. Ytterligare sätt att skoj leka kan vara att tysta vid ett bord under arbetet kasta saker som sudd, papperstussar och dyl. på varandra. Det kan också ske genom att ta saker av varandra och inte ge tillbaka det utan istället retas. Fenomenet kan även förflytta sig från elevarbetsborden till att eleverna jagar varandra tyst i klassrummet under arbetet.

I tillvägagångssättet ingår att överlåta mycket av arbetet till andra och därför är grupparbete en bekväm arbetsform eftersom den tillåter detta. Tillitten till att andra sköter arbetet är hög och på att det finns andra i gruppen som har en annan ambition och som vill ha hög kvalité på arbetet och därför ser till att det genomförs.

Att ”hitchhika” väcker irritation bland övriga kamrater i gruppen och det finns en ständig pågående retorik kring vikten av att alla måste ta ansvar för att grupparbetet ska fungera bra. Därför är det många som pratar om det här sättet att vara i gruppen men det är färre som faktiskt bekänner sig till att de tar detta tillvägagångssätt emellanåt för att kunna ”vila” och få en återhämtningspaus och få ny energi till fortsatt arbete. Tillvägagångssättet uttryckts i att fly genom att vandra till en kamrat eller att underhålla sig med annat. Det kan också vara att ignorera uppmaningar från andra eller bara ta på sig det lätta och intressanta arbetet och låta andra göra det mindre roliga och även jobbigare arbeten som Krister och Anders gör i följande samtal hämtat från ett grupparbete.

Krister: Jag gör Power Point.
Anders: Jag gör Power Point, ni får göra resten.

När Anders säger de sista orden vänder han sig till de tre flickorna i gruppen.

Anders och Krister ville här gärna ”smita” till det som de tyckte roliga delarna av arbetet, nämligen att skapa en Power Point presentation. Hur tillvägagångssättet kan uttryckas skildrar Hans i sin berättelse.


När arbetet i grupp är en bekväm form av arbete ”känns det skönt att arbeta” som Hans säger, uppfattas det delade ansvaret med både mindre och större ansvarstagande som en möjlighet och det förstnämnda ligger nära till hands när förhållningssättet är sådant. Arbetet blir bekvämt eftersom arbetsinsatsen inte
behöver vara lika stor som i ett individuellt arbete av den orsaken att det finns andra som kan ta större ansvar.

**Avslutande kommentarer**

Syftet med den här texten har varit att beskriva olika tillvägagångssätt som skapas bland elever när de grupperar och hur det kan tolkas med hjälp av symbolisk interaktionism. Tillvägagångssättet tar sin utgångspunkt i att elevernas ambition med arbetet skiljer sig åt vilket skapar en ambitionsdifferens som i sin tur påverkar hur tillvägagångssätten uttrycks.


Enligt symbolisk interaktionism byggs elevernas beteenden upp genom tolkande processer gentemot situationer, ageranden av andra elever eller olika objekt i omgivningen. Därför hänger deras ageranden intimt samman med hur de uppfattar och tolkar kamraternas handlingar i arbetet samt grupparbetet i sig. Ur dessa tolkningar skapas sedan den mening de får av grupparbetet. Från den meningen byggs föreställningar upp som är med och utvecklar olika tillvägagångssätt i grupparbetet. Eleverna tolkar varje situation med hjälp av tidigare erfarenheter av grupparbeten vilka också påverkar meningen som i sin tur påverkar deras kommande beteenden och tankar. Det innebär att vad som eleven erfart från tidigare grupparbeten i handlingar och i bemötande av andra är med och skapar de föreställningar som byggs upp i nya grupparbeten och de tillvägagångssätt som skapas. På så vis är det som hänt i tidigare grupparbeten i hög grad medskapare av nya grupparbeten.

Vad som hänt tidigare är också med och skapar den självbild som växer fram hos den enskilde eleven. Både med hjälp av interaktionen med sig själv men också i hur andra definierar henne genom sitt bemötande. Det i sin tur påverkar det tillvägagångssätt som eleven tar till sig eller blir tilldelad i interaktionen med övriga i arbetet. Där det är en ganska stor skillnad mellan ett styrande och ett mer undfallande eller smittande tillvägagångssätt. Det finns därför strukturer i grupparbetet som sätter villkor för elevernas handlingar men det är inte strukturerna i sig som bestämmer förutsättningarna för deras handlingar och
beteenden utan det är eleverna själva som bestämmer över sitt eget agerande i situationen eftersom de är aktivt handlande individer. Det skulle kunna förklara varför eleverna, när det ges tillfälle, aktivt väljer att arbeta individuellt med grupparbetet och där det är någon eller några av de mer styrande eleverna som ser till att innehållet fördelas mellan eleverna i grupparbetet.

Sammanfattnings vis så blir tolkningar av det som händer i situationen och de bemötande som andra ger samt tidigare erfarenheter av grupparbetes viktiga i de föreställningar som växer fram hos eleverna när de arbetar i grupp. Där även föreställningar kring andras intressen och målsättning, ansvarstagande och kontrollbehovet över andras arbetet är med och utvecklar den ambitionsdifferens som ligger till grund för de tillvägagångssätt som skapas i grupparbetet. Tillvägagångssättet uppstå, förhandlas och tillsdelas bland eleverna och där varje elev kan använda ett eller flera under ett och samma grupparbete. I gruppen kan under ett och samma arbete finnas både likadana och men också olika tillvägagångssätt som pågår samtidigt sida vid sida.

**Referenslista**


SOCIAL IDENTITIES OF ENGINEERING STUDENTS - A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Tomas Jungert

Introduction

People's social identities are believed to be mainly derived from group memberships; it is presumed that people are motivated to attain positive values in their social identities by favouring the ingroup in intergroup comparisons (Hogg et al., 2004). In self-categorisation theory, which is a development of social identity theory, self-categorisation produces context-specific definitions of self, which may explain the psychological basis of a social group (Oakes, Haslam, & Reynolds, 1999). Building on the self-categorisation theory it can be argued that students of an engineering programme, who work very hard, probably categorise themselves as engineering students and share a common identity as engineering students. In this paper, it is assumed that the more demanding a study programme is perceived and the more time and energy the students invest in their studies, the more salient the category as engineering student becomes and the stronger their social identities, as engineering students, will be.

The aim in this work is to contribute to the research on social identity and self-categorisation by exploring the social identities and the self-categorisations of engineering students in higher education and to explore whether the social identities change over time as the context of the students change. Thus, repeated semi-structured interviews with the same students throughout their entire study programme offered the opportunity to explore their strategies over time.

Theoretical background

In this paper, the social identities of engineering students are longitudinally explored qualitatively. Sometimes, an individual’s significant self-image can be rooted in his or her various group memberships, e.g. a work group, the family or a political party (Tajfel, 1978). One way of defining a social identity is that people of one social category identify themselves in the same way and define who they are in the same way and how they relate to and differ from specific outgroups (Hogg et al., 2004). According to Hogg et al. (2004), only one identity is psychologically real in any given condition, and the social identities can change fast as the context changes (ibid). However, the many group memberships that individuals have provide many potential bases for self-categorisations. In self-categorisation theory, the adopted self-categorisation of an individual in a certain moment is essentially context-dependent. The social identity that is adopted depends on the set of present and salient alternative self-categories in the specific moment (Sherman, Hamilton & Lewis, 1999). This
process is called self-categorisation, and will eventually result in the individual perceiving him or herself as the same as members of the category (ibid.). According to Turner et al. (1987), a shared point of reference as regards to cooperation and influence as well as a shared social identity are created by factors in a given social setting. Thus, individuals are likely to stop behaving as differing individual persons and instead behave as members of a shared social category. Variables such as nearness, similarity, or shared interests can lead to self-categorisation that produces an awareness of the social identity. In this process, prototypes are the cognitive representations of the group that specify group membership, i.e. interconnected attributes of similarities and structural relationships within the group and differences to other groups (Hogg et al., 2004). Prototypes describe ideal, often hypothetical, in-group members rather than any actual group member.

In social identity theory, the motivation for a positive social identity is stresses. Many examples illustrate how groups of various statuses act to gain or maintain a high status position (see Brown, 2000). According to Mullen, Brown, & Smith (1992), high status groups should have little identity problems and have a propensity to prove more in-group bias than low-status groups. In self-categorisation theory, the motive is less central (Sherman, Hamilton, & Lewis, 1999). However, the search for meaning and reduction of uncertainty are important features of self-categorisation theory, and depends on the context of the categorisation process (Abrams, 1992; Lepore & Brown, 1999).

Depending on how a group may react to different situations, the social identities of the group members may become more or less salient (Stryker & Statham, 1985; Tajfel, 1978). Identification with a certain social category is not fixed and stable, and may depend on many factors. Furthermore, people may have multiple group identities (Deaux, 1996). Such multiple group identities may be structured in ways reflecting relationships among multiple in-groups. Roccas and Brewer (2002) argue that individuals’ subjective representations of their multiple identities vary in complexity. In some contexts, the social identity in one group may be more salient than other social identities.

Building on the social identity theory and self-categorisation theory it can be argued that engineering students of a prestigious programme, who work very hard, probably both share a common identity as and self-categorise themselves as engineering students. The more demanding the programme is perceived and the more they invest in their studies, i.e. the heavier they perceive the workload, the stronger their social identities as engineering students will be. Subsequently, the purpose of this study is to longitudinally explore the social identities of engineering students and seeks to answer the following research questions:
1) How do engineering students self-categorise themselves in relation to various out-groups?

2) How do their social identities differ depending on how they perceive their workload and depending on in which year of the programme they are studying?

**The context**

The context of this study is a 4.5 year Masters’ programme in Applied Physics and Electrical Engineering. It has been marketed as a prestigious programme with the objective to educate Masters of Science in Engineering capable of working at the international front of technical development and secure and enhance the competence of the industry and the society. The programme is organized with mostly parallel courses and a large proportion of scheduled lectures, laboratory work and lessons. The students take part in the same curriculum the first two years, designed to lay a basic foundation for the forthcoming studies. After completing their basic studies, they can choose among twelve profiles of engineering. The concluding Masters’ thesis is written in the specific area of specialisation chosen and mainly conducted at companies in the industrial sector. The students are expected to engage completely in their studies, but have the possibility to devote all their time, except for assigned laboratory work, to self-instruction if they so wish.

**Method**

In 1998, an evaluation project of an engineering programme at Linköping University was initiated. This project developed into a large longitudinal research project with the overall purpose of comparing the expectations and experiences of four cohorts of engineering students (Edvardson Stiwne, 2005). Data collections took place twice during their first year and once a year until one year after stipulated graduation by means of questionnaires and interviews with questions ranging over several areas (e.g. Edvardson Stiwne, et al., 2002). All registered students from each cohort were asked to answer the questionnaires and ten students from each cohort were interviewed.

In order to give a more specific and richer picture of the students’ experiences, interviews with students from the 1999 and 2000 cohorts were analysed. In order to facilitate the presentation of the results, the interviewees of the 1999 cohort will be called Karolina, Jenny, Daniel and Paul, and the interviewees of the 2000 cohort will be called Alexander, Lukas, Sofia and Linda. These participants volunteered and their anonymity was guaranteed. The interviews were semi-structured. An interview guide, based on the questionnaires of the project, was constructed. The guide had descriptive questions that ranged freely over several areas: students’ experiences of study-related health, workload, identification with the programme, opportunities to
influence their study situation, and their satisfaction with the co-operation with teachers and class-mates. The interviews lasted approximately one hour each and were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The interviews were analyzed in several stages. All interviews were thoroughly read several times. Thereafter, a thematic analysis of the data resulted in a delimitation of the following three main areas: how do the students perceive their study environment, how do they identify themselves with their study programme, and finally, do the identifications differ between students and over time? These three areas is then analysed in order to explore how the students’ identifications with their study programme may be understood as self-categorisations and social identities. The process of developing knowledge in the area of social identification has occurred in interaction between data and theory, where new understanding of both data and theory is created and reflected in each other (cf Alvesson & Sköldberg, 1994).

Results

In the results from the interviews with the students, the three main areas (a) how do the students perceive their study environment, (b) how do they identify themselves with their study programme, and finally, (d) do the identifications differ between students and over time, will be presented. When the students talk about their engineering programme, they sometimes use the abbreviation Y, and sometimes the abbreviation Y-student, when they talk about students of the programme. This short form for naming the programme and the students in the programme has been used by both faculty and students since the beginning of the programme. Y and Y-student will henceforth be used to designate the programme and students of the programme when appropriate.

How the students perceived their study environment

In the first interview, students from both cohorts experienced frustration over the high study rate and high workload. In general, the students worked hard and were often lagging behind. Some examples below illustrate these feelings:

We have 40 hours per week at school and then ten to twenty hours at home during the evenings and weekends (Paul)

If I were to do all the tasks, I’d have to work all around the clock (Jenny)

However, some students from the 2000 cohort had expected an even higher workload:

Perhaps it is a bit easier than I thought, because you thought ooooh, it will be overwhelming, but it is definitely surmountable, so in that respect it is easier, but it is not easy. (Sofia)
The workload is smaller than I had expected so I think… I don’t feel it has been overwhelming… of course you need to sit down and study. (Linda)

Sofia explained that her driving force was to do what you had to do as well as you ought to because she was brought up to be a ‘good girl’. This made her very dutiful.

Many students expressed that they appreciated being students because it made them feel free in various ways, e.g. they could choose what to do and when to do it and whom to work with.

It is quite a comfortable life… there a many nice things to do here. (Daniel)

And fun… the second year was fun, but then… I got involved in a lot of activities beside the studies and all those things were fun as such, but together with the studies it was just a bit too much, so it was actually both hard and fun. (Lukas)

To summarize, the students experienced that the study conditions were very demanding during the first years, and the students worked quite a lot. At the same time, they spend a lot of time together, both when they studied and when they had their leisure time. Many students structured their lives according to the programme, and often felt that the programme was their life, as if they were living in a world of their own.

How the students identified themselves with their study programme
As they almost only saw students from the programme they felt very akin to each other. These were important factors that made students identify themselves as engineering students of Y, as illustrated in the following citation:

Surely, you always feel affinity with the ones who study the same programme as you do… (Karolina)

The parties were also a factor that contributed to the students’ identification with the programme, especially in the first interview. Student-parties in the programme served an important function in making the students identify themselves even more with the programme. Some students emphasised that they felt more affinity with the programme during the parties at the university, because the students from the different programmes wear their own special programme overalls:

I don’t know anyone from another programme… it is probably because there aren’t any natural moments where you see other people. Here, the parties take place within the sections of the programme. (Jenny)

A general attitude was that other programmes were fuzzy. However, most students did not have any contacts with students from other programmes, so this
attitude was probably based on hearsay. Sofia did not think the differences between her programme and other engineering programmes were that big, but stressed that there was a difference between Y-students and engineering students who studied business. Some students also mentioned that in their programme, they studied much harder than in other programmes, because they had both technical physics and electronics. In the last interview, Paul explained how this had impressed people in Germany, where he had written his Masters’ thesis:

Engineers in electronics are quite common, but we have physics too. The status is very good and you get to scratch on and feel many different things in our programme…

(Paul)

The students all claimed that it was a good programme with high quality in practically all aspects. The teachers were estimated as competent. They were proud and happy to be students in the programme. Many students saw it as a challenge to study in such a demanding programme, and many students stressed their desire to solve problems. Thus, one reason for feeling proud about being a student in the programme was that they thought it meant a high status among students, but also that the programme had a very high quality. For example, Daniel said “The quality is high, better than most of the others”, and Jenny said that the programme had “extremely high quality. The math courses are very good. The university has a high standard and status”. Another reason for students to feel proud was that the programme had a reputation of being demanding and difficult. In the first interviews, the students did not want to change the programme in ways that could destroy its reputation as one of the most difficult programmes in Sweden. Students also said that they believed that people outside the programme probably thought of it as very difficult. To the students, this meant that they had a reputation of being intelligent. To be proud was a key word, and some students liked it when people they met were impressed with what they were studying. Karolina felt proud of being a student in the programme, because of its reputation as very difficult. This concerned both cohorts, but more notably the 1999 cohort:

Proud [laughs] mmm... it is fun to hear, because when you tell people you are a Y-student, they usually believe it is very difficult, and it is like ‘aha, you study Y’, while I myself, I don’t think so much about that, so it’s more others’ [reactions], if you say technical physics and electronics, a lot goes… then you feel proud, but not much otherwise. (Alexander)

Some students did not feel proud in this way at all, and had a more complicated relationship to the programme, especially in the first interview. Sofia was not proud of just being a Y-student, but she was proud of her good grades as well.
If someone knows what Y is, it is not as wearisome to say that I am a Y-student. But if they don’t and I tell them I am a student in technical physics and electronics, then it is not as fun, because it doesn’t sound as fun and people say ‘ohh, do you only study maths and electronics, ugh how boring!’ so I think they…well, that the programme is dreary is a public opinion, and that we are narrow-minded and only in to maths…it depends on who you talk with. (Sofia)

Thus, some students felt proud just by being students in a programme with such a reputation, but this reputation made other students fear they would be regarded as peculiar by other people. Many students even had expected that there would be a whole lot of ‘nerds’ in the programme. They had the view that ‘nerds’ who are only interested in technology and computing apply for this kind of engineering programme. Other students, such as Karolina, were not afraid of the image of the Y-student as a peculiar person. Karolina said: “the students in this programme are like most people, only more goal-oriented and more ambitious.” However, she admitted that she thought the character of the students in the programme was supposed to be special, but that there was nothing anyone could or should do about it. Others feared that this was the most common image that people outside the programme would have of engineering students. When asked about what they thought the typical characteristics of a Y-student were, the students often gave an image of some kind of ‘nerd’:

I don’t know what is typical for a Y-student; you have prejudices… that they are young and a bit peculiar types. (Daniel)

However, none of the interviewed students identified themselves as ‘nerds’, and some students, such as Jenny, got a bit agitated when she talked about the reputation the Y-students could have:

A lot of prejudices about what kind of students there would be here... computer freaks with long hair, shy and timid, not that social and not out partying. But that is totally wrong. Most of them are like me, interested in the subjects and like to party and have fun too (Jenny)

Alexander distinguished between half of the students in the programme who only are there to study and do not seem to do much else, and the other half who does things besides studying:

So I feel affinity with them, sort of, to go out sometimes during the weekends and make up weird things...we are a couple of guys in the class, we often go out and prank because it is fun. (Alexander)

*How the identifications of the students differed between students and over time*
Many of the interviewed students said that their image of what an engineering student really is changed throughout the years. In the beginning of their studies,
their image was not at all that positive, as expressed in the following terms by Sofia:

In the first grade I thought an engineering student was the kind of guy who is very narrow in his ways of thinking. (Sofia)

Sofia is again referring to what may be called the category ‘technology nerd’, which is quite widespread, especially among university students. The interviewed students were afraid that they would be categorised as one of the ‘nerds’, and were relieved when they understood that there are many kinds of engineering students, and that they did not belong to the worst kind.

In the last interview, the study rate was more moderate, which helped students get more time to reflect over their studies. Many students, especially in the 1999 cohort, realized they had been working too hard and sacrificed too much to receive good grades and keep their identification with a high status student group. Some students, who had had the feeling of living in a closed little world at Y (e.g. Daniel and Jenny), felt limited in the milieu of the programme. They were afraid that they had not developed as individuals as they only saw people from their programme. When they got time to reflect over their situation and the programme, they became more disappointed that they met so few people from outside their own little world and that the possibilities to develop as individuals were rather poor. However, nearly everyone agreed that they had learned something important. The most significant thing they had learned in the programme was a new way of thinking and reasoning. They had acquired a scientific way of thinking and had become more analytical and problem solving individuals, as illustrated by Alexander:

…in a certain way, our ways of thinking may be alike in some respects, at least you will get it in this kind of programme. (Alexander)

After the first couple of years, they started to see more people outside the programme, and this had consequences for their feelings of identity with the programme. In the last interview, many students started to identity themselves as engineers instead of as typical engineering students. In her last interview, Sofia narrates how this developed:

The first two years, it was definitely as if you lived in your Y-world. But then, as I know a lot of people outside, I don’t spend that much time with students from the programme these days, and if I do, I don’t know them as Y-students, but as people from a certain town. And most of all, I have studied other things; I mean this semester I don’t do one single course from the programme. I just do other courses, and this makes me more dissociated from the programme. My identity as an engineer is thereby strengthened. (Sofia)

Does it feel good then, that you really are an engineer? (Interviewer)
Yes, that is the strange part… that I do… I guess I will have to get used to having a way of thinking … and I don’t think the term is as narrow as I once thought. I don’t belong to the worst part. (Sofia)

Lukas also said that he felt more like an engineer by the end of his studies:

When I see a technical gadget sort of, I think about how it works and how you can solve technical problems … It is hard to define what you feel like when you feel like an engineer, but still I think that I do. I start to feel more as an engineer than as a student. (Lukas)

Both he and Paul said that they wanted others to think of them as the sort of person with an analytical way of thinking, as someone who is difficult to fool with a critical way of thinking; not only concerning technical things, but in general, and who can question what he reads and hears. Paul emphasised that he had worked really hard to reach his position as an engineer:

I want people to see me as someone who has worked really hard to accomplish what I have accomplished … it means that I am persistent, diligent, and can work towards goals. (Paul)

**Discussion**

The results of both questionnaires and interviews show that the workload is perceived as heavy. In the interviews, the students’ experiences suggest that they study very hard in a highly demanding engineering programme. They had to prioritize a lot and sacrifice other interests in order to perform well. They were determined to succeed and were prepared to work hard. The students said that they identified themselves with the programme and as Y-students mainly because they spent much time in the programme and with other students in the programme. They also said that they were proud to study there for at least three reasons: (i) the programme is demanding and difficult, which has given it a reputation as a high status programme, (ii) the ones who succeed in such a programme must be intelligent and good students, and (iii) the quality of the programme is high compared to other programmes.

The programme is a broad education that attracts students of many interests and with many motives for studying. This makes it difficult to describe the typical Y-student. Nevertheless, all interviewed students gave similar traits of students in their programme, something that could be interpreted as a prototype in terms of social identity theory. The prototype was described as the successful student who was disciplined, ambitious, stubborn and good at technical subjects. It was also emphasised that to appreciate challenges and to be persistent was imperative to fit in the programme. This shows, in line with social identity theory (see Hogg et al., 2004) that the prototype describes the ideal and
hypothetical, in-group member rather than the average or a typical Y-student. The proximity, similarity, and shared interests of the students led to a self-categorisation and a prototype that produced a consciousness of a social identity as a ‘Y-student’.

The interviewed students felt that they belonged to a high status group with positive uniqueness in relation to ‘other’ students. They identified themselves as Y-students in relation to four categories of students. (1) In relation to students who do not study engineering who they categorized as fuzzy. To be students in a programme that is demanding and that no one would consider fuzzy was enough for some of them to feel proud, which also increased their self-esteem. (2) They categorized themselves in relation to students in other engineering programmes. Such programmes were not considered fuzzy, but students pointed out that they were special compared to other engineering students. Firstly, their programme is the most demanding of all engineering programmes. They need to study more during their 4.5 years than other engineering students must do, since they both have electronics and technical physics. Secondly, students in their programme were also categorised as being more interested in the subjects, more stubborn and more diligent than students in other engineering programmes. To talk about oneself as stubborn and diligent is a typical characteristic that also illustrates their self-categorisation in relation to a third category of students; (3) the one between successful and not successful Y-students. The students’ statements illustrate that not every student in their programme was categorized as special, high-status students. Only students who shared their stubbornness, persistence, aptitude and interest for the subjects were categorized this way. What the students refer to is the prototype of the successful Y-student, i.e. an ideal, hypothetical group member (Hogg et al., 2004). Successful and diligent Y-students belong to a high status group among students. By recreating the identity of the members of this high status group, the students prove in-group bias in order to reach positive uniqueness, supporting findings by e.g. Mullen, Brown, & Smith (1992). Their uniqueness is reached in relation to the students in their programme who are not stubborn and persistent enough.

Thus, the social identity of a successful student was a student who achieved well in the studies, but who was not a nerd. This means that social mobility is possible for unsuccessful students; by working harder they could change their social identity from unsuccessful to successful.

Finally, (4) students categorised themselves in relation to other stubborn and intelligent students in their programme who they considered to be technical nerds. In the first interviews, they believed or feared that most people outside their programme had a picture of the typical Y-student as some kind of a ‘technical nerd’, who only is interested in technical things, is boring and not
very social. In order to defend themselves from this rather unpleasant prototype, they clearly emphasised that they were not ‘nerds’. Technical nerds were not believed to have equally high status. When they talked about themselves, it was not clear how they differed from ‘the nerds’, because they discerned themselves from other engineering students and categorized their in-group as the hardest working, most interested, devoted and possibly the most intelligent student group of all engineering student groups.

All these four examples of how the engineering students identified themselves as members of the successful engineering student category may also be examples of a depersonalisation and self-stereotyping of the students. An important motive for these processes is probably to maximise meaning (Abrams, 1992) and to reduce uncertainty, which, according to Hogg and Mullin (1999), are the main reasons for an individual’s strive for a positive social identity. Since the students were studying very hard and perceived their workload as much higher than of students of other study programmes, one motive for their self-categorisation and self-stereotyping may have been to reduce uncertainty whether it was worth all the hard work or not. Simultaneously, studying very hard in highly technical areas may by others be considered something that nerds do. Therefore, the interviewed students distinguished themselves from the ‘nerds’; both when claiming that they were not as narrow-minded as nerds, and when claiming that they were more social. These self-categorisations can thus be seen as both ways of reducing uncertainty and to maximize the meaning on the hard work of the interviewed students.

Many students agreed that people in their programme are rather special and that it is a rather closed world. However, there was a development over time. In the final interviews they started to differentiate themselves from engineering students and more identified themselves as engineers. They did not categorize themselves as much in reference to how other people viewed them anymore (e.g. as nerds) but as how they perceived themselves. They could feel proud that they would manage to make it through. Then, they were more confident of themselves and did not categorise themselves as much in relation to others and emphasized their identity as engineers rather than as students, i.e. their analytical ways of thinking.

Paradoxically, students thought the study rate was extremely high and the schedule too compressed to give time for hobbies and reflection, but they also thought that being a student meant a free and flexible life. In a sense, students are free to dispose their time as they wish, which may give them a sense of freedom. However, students knew that in order to succeed, they must sacrifice most of their freedom. To them, it was worth to sacrifice their freedom, as long as their programme was perceived as demanding. The more demanding the
programme is, the more students could identify themselves with a prestigious programme and as members of a high status group where the ones who perform well are categorized as intelligent, diligent and successful. Students who receive good grades under such hard conditions may boost their self-efficacy, self-worth, and self-esteem. A less demanding programme with a slower tempo could both lower these students’ self-efficacy and self-esteem and cause identity problems. They are motivated to maintain a positive image of the self, which only is possible the more demanding the programme is perceived. This gives support to the notion that if the programme is perceived not only as very demanding, but as the most demanding and most prestigious programme with the highest status, it is good for their self-esteem (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). This is only valid for students who find self-enhancement to be the most important motive for identification. These students, who also have high self-efficacy, do what they can to secure their position and wanted to get recognition for their achievements. When the conditions are very demanding and students are not sure they will be rewarded for their hard work, they do all they can to protect their self-esteem and keep their self-efficacy. However, not all interviewed students shared this view, for which self-esteem was not the only motivation for identification (Hogg & Grieve, 1999). They toned down the importance of status and prestige and valued other things more, which supports the findings that individuals can increase their self-esteem by expressing other features of the in-group (Roccas, 2003). These findings support the notion that social identities are context dependent, (e.g. Hogg et al., 2004). In a certain situation, social identities as Y-students were salient, in other situations, other identities. For example, in the first years of the programme, the identity as a student in relation to other students was the most salient, while in the final years, the identity as an engineer was the most salient. Their social identity changed as the context changed, both in terms of which social identity and in terms of what form the identity may take. Thus, the longitudinal design of this project made it possible to capture how the social identities of engineering students changed over time.

References


Identity Theories and Ageing Processes on the Concept of Coding

Clary Krekula & Jan Trost

Introduction

There are two important social psychological identity theories. One is called social identity theory and the other just identity theory. The social identity theory comprises theoretical developments for example by Turner and Hogg with colleagues (see 1987) and by Tajfel (see 1982), while the identity theory includes work by McCall and Simmons (see 1978) and by Stryker (see 1968). The identity theory is very close to the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism in sociology while the social identity theory is closer to psychology. This means, i. a., that identity theory is based upon the idea of activities and behaviour while social identity theory is based upon traits. Expressed differently they can be described as what we do versus what we are. (Stets & Burke, 2000, Trost & Levin, 2004) Thus, identity theory sees identity as a process and not as anything static. The labelling is somewhat odd; it would have been more logical with a naming as the opposite or as it has been suggested, naming the perspectives as the group psychological identity perspective and the micro sociological identity perspective (Krekula, 2006).

In this article, we will use a conceptual understanding of identities offered by the so called identity theory, to discuss ageing processes. Our purpose is not to elaborate the concepts per se, but rather to use the perspective to analyze ageing processes and to shed light on the identity processes as they emerge when an age dimension is applied in the analyses.

A background to the identity concept

When William James around the break between 1878 and 1879 was travelling and newly married, he wrote to his wife a letter where he among other things said that at some occasions there is a voice inside us which speaks to us and says “This is the real me!” (James, 1926 (1920), part I, p. 199, italics in the original)

This is supposed to be the first kind of definition of the term identity and thus the first clarified concept with the label identity. Most important according to our opinion is that he wrote that it happens at some occasions. This means that he indicated that we have more than one identity and that the identities vary by situation, that they are situated. And he exactly meant that we have several identities and that they are situation bound.

However, we had to wait until 1918 for the term definition of the situation – which among other things offers a theoretical understanding of situated
identities – came in the first volume of “The Polish Peasant in Europe and America” (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918–20, p. 68). And we had to wait until 1928 before we had the famous definition of the situation “What men define as real, is real in its consequences” in a book written by William Isaac Thomas and Dorothy Swaine Thomas. (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572)

James meant that our identities are not traits but are constructed in relation to the groups to which we belong and this means in its turn that we would have as many selves or identities as the number of groups with which we identify us. Thus, according to James, our identities are constructed in everyday life in our interaction with others. From this also follows that our identities are situation bound.

We can here find similarities with Charles Horton Cooley who is famous for, among other things, the looking-glass self. Cooley said in 1902 that our self or our identity has three social components. The first one is our imagination about how others perceive us. The second component is our imagination of others evaluation of us. And the third component is a self-feeling evoked by these our imaginations. Thus, contrary to what some critics argue, already more than a hundred years ago emotions were introduced in the theoretical perspective and related to identities and therefore also to individuals scope of actions. The self-feeling had to do with, as Cooley said, pride and shame — two clearly social emotions. (Cooley, 1922 (1902, p. 184))

We have now moved from the 1870s to the middle of the 1930s and we will see what has happened with identity as looked upon by some others within the same theoretical perspective. One important person, who not really belonged to the same perspective, is Ralph Linton who in the 1930s wrote about roles. He looked upon roles as related to social positions (he used, however, the term status). According to his ideas we perceive expectations directed upon us connected to the various social positions we have. Thus, also for him our lives are situation bound since we do not “play” all roles all the time, we do not have the same positions all the time. (Linton, 1936)

From role expectation to identity negotiations

Opposition against what was then called role theory, which in fact had to do with the old concept of social identity, came from two partly diverse angles. One of the criticisms came from feminist groups. They meant that the idea of roles was too restrictive and socially too static and at the same time individually too flexible – as if roles were like a coat which you can put on and take off when feasible. To these feminists the term as well as the concept of role should be abandoned since it acted as a conservative agent in society.

The other “attack” upon roles came from Gregory Stone and Ralph Turner in the beginning of the 1960s. Turner disliked the idea about expectations and norms directed from others and argued for a change to the effect of readiness to act. He clearly introduced activities on the scene (Turner, 1972 (1962)).
According to him, we are prone to act in a given situation based upon a fairly unclear set of responses given by persons in the situation as by us perceived.

Stone (1959, 1972 (1962)) went further in his critique of the old role theory and advocated for a use of the idea of identities in stead of roles. He meant that our identities are constructed since, as human social beings, we are placed as social objects by others in the same manner as we see ourselves and tell ourselves. Important here is that we are speaking about the individual’s own perception of how others place her as a social object and also about her perception of herself in the glance of others.

By distinguishing two dimensions of identities, the actors and the observer’s perspective, the light is shed on two things: First, the distinction between identity claims and identity ascriptions draws attention to identities as processes constructed in the interaction. Based on Goffman’s notion (1972, 1959 (1990)) that internalised expectations more correctly should be articulated as demands, these processes have been described by the metaphor of negotiations (Krekula, 2006). We can say that identities are internalized role expectations and if we deviate from these expectations we might be defined as odd, or even worse than that. Shame has often been described as a set of sanctions for deviations from expected behaviour and thereby as a mean to get conformity (see for example Heller, 1985; Izard, 1991; Katz, 1999; Lehtinen, 1998; Misheva, 2000; Scheff, 1990; Taylor, C., 1985; Taylor, G., 1985).

The second point of importance, raised by Stone’s notion of identities as a labelling both by ourselves and by others, is that it means that a person’s identities are not limited to herself but are connected to the other persons in the situation – no difference whether they are present in our imagination or as potentially present in our minds. The fact that we place ourselves and others in social situations, which give us identities, also means that we include some persons in our sphere and at the same time exclude other persons from the situation thus defined.

The identification with a collective means that the individual also implies the common perspective as it’s own, with other words, defines some norms as relevant for herself, something Mead (1934 (1967)) used the term “generalized others” to describe (see also Shibutani, 1961). As recent researchers have indicated, identification with a collective also means that the individual incorporate routines and linguistic and embodied schemes, that is, they incorporate those social groups in their own actions (Crossley, 2001). In these ways, our identities are with us all the time and they structure our lives. This is so although identities are in constant change and the process of change goes usually so slowly that often the process is not visible for those involved.

Identities are often spoken about as a collective noun, but sometimes it is important to use plural – identities. Since we have not only one identity, as James rightfully claimed, we can use the collective noun sometimes but when being more precise we should use the word in plural. We have said that
identities change and that they are bound to situations. Some identities are not active at a given situation, others are. But some identities are always present for an observer: for example, age, gender, and ethnicity. However, this does not necessarily mean that they are meaning making in the actual situation for the actor.

Other identities can be latent or manifest. But since the terms latent and manifest can be seen as either – or, Sheldon Stryker (1980) introduced the term salience in the 1980s. With this term we avoid the either – or phenomenon. Some identities are more or less present or salient in a given situation. For example, when we are customers in a store our identities as customers are salient and we are also a man/woman of an unspecified age. In the store other customers and the personnel have expectations upon us to behave as a customer and nothing else, but also as a man/woman of an unspecified age. In our culture these expectations can be said to be our role if we want to use that term. The expectations say that we should behave politely and pay for what we want to buy, stay properly in line and not break the line. Expressed differently, identities are sets of meanings connected to the labels. As soon as we leave the store our identities as a customer are toned down, and instead our identities as pedestrians will be more relevant both for ourselves and for an observer. When on the walkway we meet a student our identities as teachers might be in focus and guide our actions.

The above described departing point in a multitude of identities, negotiated in the interaction and more or less salient, sheds the light on the question about which identities that are relevant in each given situation. By talking about identities as discursive practices recent researchers (see for example Winter Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000) emphasize how individuals act in relation to internalized discourses of socially constructed categories and how some discourses have been institutionalized, and thereby have won dominance over others.

Parallel identity negotiations

In this second part of the article, we will elaborate one specific aspect of identity negotiations, namely the presence of manifold partners, what we will talk about as manifold norm standards, that is, what we above have talked about as norms and identifications with groups.

The results we will present here are based on qualitative interviews with 12 women in ages 75 to 90 years, which have resulted in about 40 hours of interviews. The interviews have been focused on the women’s experiences of their identity processes during their lives (for a further description, see Krekula, 2006).

The analysis of the data emphasizes how the women relate to, not one but to many different norm standards. We will illustrate this by focusing on one of the informants, a 75 year old highly educated women, here called Diana.
Diana describes herself as “self-sacrificing” both in relation to her children and to her partners in relationships. She describes her mother, in a similar way, and argues that she has learnt this self-sacrificing attitude from her mother. In this aspect one might say that her mother, more than fifty years after her death, with the concept of Mead’s (1934 (1967)) continues to be a significant other for Diana. In short, Diana who left her original home for more than fifty-five years ago, and who since then for example has been engaged in the women’s lib and has made a great professional career, continues to make an identity claim as self-sacrificing – that is, an identity she identifies with her dead mother.

Let’s take a look on two quotations where she talks about this self-image. In the first one she is responding to a question if she still thinks of herself as self-sacrificing:

Yes, I guess I would say so. Even though…I mean, sometimes when my children want me to help them, I say to me “They are grown-ups now”. I try to convince myself that it is bad to help someone too much. So I try to cut it down.

In the second quotation, where she talks about possible relationships in the future, she says:

Actually, I do believe that I would be subordinated and willing to serve in a possible relationship. Sorry to say, I don’t believe I would be able to handle an equal relationship.

In the first of these quotations where Diana describes how she actually acts with her children, an interpretation of the quotation is that she negotiates her identity as self-sacrificing in situated interactions. In the second case, she visualizes herself in a possible relationship, and makes her identity claim against a pictured counter role. An interpretation of these two quotations is that they illustrate two different identity processes, a situated process with her children and an internalized process with a possible future partner. This is an illustration of what Strauss has referred to as interactions with “supplementary actors” and argued that many of them “will represent groups to which the actor belongs, and will expect gestures from him during the interaction.” (1959 (1997), p. 58).

Expressed differently, we are participating in many identity negotiations at the same time. In the meantime as we take part in a situated face-to-face interaction, we also take part in internalized interactions both with internalized significant others and with internalized norms. For example, when Diana decides how to act as a woman, both in interactions with her children and in an imagined meeting in a relationship, she is involved in a negotiation both with the norms she shared with her mother and for example with the norms she perceives with other women in women’s movement. The outcome of such a negotiation will affect how she acts in different situations, with other words, which identity claim that will be made.
So far, we have argued that identity negotiations can be understood as many parallel negotiations. These can be situated or internalized, and they can take part between individuals in face-to-face-interaction or between individual and internalized participators. The internalized participators can be significant others as well as generalized others, with other words, they can be images of well-known persons as well as images of perceived group norms.

In short, there can be a great number of possible interactions, ongoing at the same time. These can take place in face-to-face interactions between actors and significant others or between actors and strangers, and they can take place between actors and internalized persons, such as previous or absent significant others, and finally they can take place between actors and perceived group norms (Krekula, 2006).

This emphasis on identity processes as many parallel negotiations do distinguish a bit from classical social psychological identity perspectives, as they have been expressed by Cooley and Mead. Even though Mead, with the concepts of significant others and of generalized others, departed from an understanding of both situated and internalized norm standards, he did not elaborate these as parallel processes. The same can be said about Cooley’s looking glass self. Two of its elements – the imagination of the appearance and the imagination of the others’ judgement of that appearance – can be described as an interaction between situated persons and the actors internalized judgement. However, the interaction between these parallel processes was not further problematized by Cooley.

However, when such problematization is done, light is shed on two issues, namely (1) the role of the body in identity processes, and (2) the question of whose identity confirmation the actor wants to receive.

**Age coded phenomena and identity confirmation**

Departing from the understanding of identity processes as many intertwining interactions, it has been argued that the role of the body depends on (1) the identity claims that are made, and (2) with whom the interaction occurs (Krekula, 2006).

In interactions with strangers, physical appearance is the only available identity claim, while in identity negotiations with friends and relatives, appearance is just one among many other accessible identity ascriptions. Further, a time dimension is present when individuals regard their bodies. Views on one’s own body are made through a screen of images of what one “used to be” and in which direction one is manipulating the body. An observer, especially a stranger, on the other hand, can observe the body without using such time dimension. Thus, the body image stands out as not one, but as many body images. While the actor’s body image can be described as a process, including the time dimension, this is not the case for an observer, who can regard the actor’s body only as a condition.
Even though individuals can participate in many ongoing identity processes, the body is of interest only in those made face-to-face. Theoretically, it may therefore be fruitful to consider that the actor and the observer have different opinions about the categorization of the body and about its value in the interaction.

The actor has an inside perspective on her body, a body dimension that has been referred to as the on-stage-body (Krekula, 2005, 2006). She knows the identity ascriptions she’s aiming for; she knows what has been hidden and the bodily manipulations that have been done. The observer on the other hand, does not necessarily have such understanding, but will use the perceived body image to ascribe various identities to the actor, and departing from these ascriptions judge the actor’s behaviour. With other words, the observer’s judgement of the body image follows the same parallel processes described above: While observing the actor in the situated interaction, there is at the same time an ongoing internalized interaction, where the actor is compared to evaluations of norms correlated to her position. Let us use the ascription of age identity as an illustration of this: Ascriptions of age identities depart from (1) a valuation of perceived age signs and symbolical bodily resources and, (2) notions of phenomenon and actions as more appropriate for some ages than for others, what Krekula (2006) has referred to as age coding of phenomena. An illustration of age coded phenomena is the saying “mutton dressed as lamb”, which is a condescending expression used for older women who don’t dress in accordance with general expectations for their age (Hockey & James, 1993).

Manifold identity processes, as discussed above, draw attention to a complex understanding of the body’s role in the interaction, emphasizing that instead of talking about embodied identity processes as one single process, it might be fruitful to problematize the body contextually, including the situation, the actor’s intersecting social positions, partners in the interaction and age coding of current phenomena.

Further, a starting point in many parallel identity processes draws attention to the question of identity confirmation, while many norm standards imply that all of them are possible to be in focus and guide the decisions about which activities that are considered to be correct and which are not. The presence of multiple, parallel identity processes opens up for the theoretical suggestion that the actor may have different needs with regard to having her identity claims confirmed by the persons in the interaction. It should therefore not be taken for granted that the individual needs to obtain confirmation from those actually present. In cases when an individual focuses an internalized identity negotiation those persons present may have less power to reject her identity claims. Accordingly, they may have less possibility to ascribe identities or to punish actions that are not expected and therefore not considered as appropriate for a person with the actual social position.
Let us illustrate how this theoretical reasoning can be used to shed light on a well-known social gerontological fact, the so called ageless self (Kaufman, 1986). Recurrent studies indicate that elders express that they don’t feel old, which can be illustrated in the following quotation:

They are looked upon by most people younger than themselves, because of their physical appearance, as getting older or as old. They look on each other as old! And yet remarkable, scarcely any of them ‘feel old’ or ‘think of themselves as being old.’ (Thompson, et.al. 1990)

When someone characterizes a person as old, they expect her to act in accordance with age related expectations. As mentioned above, actions that are not in accordance with expectations can result in shame. However, experiences of agelessness are not related to feelings of shame. This means that elders maintain their youthful identity claims, and resist ascriptions of identities as old without perceiving sanctions as shame, regardless whether these youthful claims are supported or not. One theoretical interpretation of this is that these identity processes are related to internalized norm standards, which allow the elderly to get identities coded as “youthful”, regardless of the opinion of those present. Recurrent confirmation on these identities in earlier situations has been internalized and constitutes a stronger identity confirmation than offered by the people actually present (see also Krekula, 2005).

**Concluding remarks on the concept of coding**

In this article we have sketched out some aspects of a social psychological identity concept that stands out when an age dimension is applied. A main point has been the understanding of identities as many parallel identity negotiations, which has also been discussed as interactions between manifold norm standards. This means, as our argument goes, that the light is shed on the body’s role in the interaction, and on identities’ various needs to obtain support and confirmation by those persons actually present in the interaction. We will conclude by some final comments on the usefulness of such identity understanding, more specifically, on the usefulness on the concept of (age) coding of phenomena.

As discussed above, the concept of (age) coding sheds light on the connection between perceived expectations and norms for social positions and categories, and the bodies that actually take part in the interaction. Bodies appear both as “sensuous and socialized” (Krekula, 2006, p. 226). Accordingly, we need to scrutinize both dimensions when trying to make sense to individuals meaning making in their everyday life.

A deeper understanding of the sensuous body in demarcated contexts, can expose how situations and phenomena are lived by different bodies, for example the different meanings attached to processes and situations, whether experienced through an energetic and strong body or through a slow body marked by pain.
Such data can help us to understand how norms and deviants are constructed, what has also been described as “othering processes” (Pickering, 2001), and to reveal dominating discourses on social positions and categories.

The expression “socialized body” brings the attention to the internalized expectations by which categories are constructed in interaction. As we have argued above and elsewhere, individual’s identities and thereby their scope of actions, are constructed in relation to perceived notions of how phenomena are coded. For example, the identity as old can be a manner to express that one perceives the breaking of expectations based on age (Krekula, 2006). The concept of coding can therefore be a useful tool in studies of how norms, othering processes and notions of categories are constructed in interactions in everyday lives. Thereby, research on how situations, phenomena and identities are coded, can contribute to a broader understanding of how different subjective experiences of everyday lives are shaped, sustained and negotiated in the interaction.

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The study of emotions emerged at the end of the twentieth century as a transdisciplinary problematic in which the interests of many social and humanitarian sciences overlap. It may also be said that this once insignificant and marginal field on the map of knowledge has today become one of the most contested knowledge territories, concerning which an impressive number of sciences claim exploration rights and expertise. Emotions are dealt with in psychology, psychiatry, sociology, philosophy, theology, anthropology, linguistics, history, classical scholarship, as well as primatology and a vast range of neurosciences. Moreover, many scholars had become convinced at the turn of the century that such fact comprised clear signs that an "emotion revolution," or an "affect revolution" as some prefer to call it, was underway.

Nevertheless, progress in the investigation of emotions has been hindered by the fact that the disciplines interested in the subject not only study emotions from their particular disciplinary perspectives, they also code their observations in the various specialized languages they use. They are thus unable to communicate their results to other sciences. In addition, communication problems exist not only between but also within the disciplines involved in the study of emotions. After more than a century of research focusing on emotions, there is still little agreement as to what emotions really are, how they should be defined, or what their relationships are with other related phenomena, such as feelings, consciousness, moods, instincts, affects, traits, or the imagination. The specialized literature clearly indicates that the word "emotion" simultaneously signifies many disciplinary notions and images that are unrelated to each other. This fact invites the conclusion that the emotion studies do not form a unified research field.

Scheff argued that it is "the particular knowledge about emotions" which we have in common that makes it possible for us to communicate on the topic insofar as those researching the emotions share no "generalized knowledge of emotions" (Scheff, 2000, 84). But such "particular knowledge" cannot adequately guarantee the theoretical and empirical unity of the field and provide the foundation for truly interdisciplinary cooperation. It is as if the lack of a common language transforms this body of researchers, each with her/his own individual and disciplinary knowledge about emotions, into a crowd constructing a modern tower of Babel – they all come to one and the same construction site through the most diverse ways, but cannot begin any common project.

Yet another obstacle to any advance in research is the fact that this so-called revolution is apparently driven by individualistic social psychology and has no
proper roots in socio-psychological theories concerned with the social foundation of human behavior (Fischer and Tangney, in Fischer and Tangney, 1995, 3). Although impressive collective efforts have been made to sharpen the socio-psychological focus on *self-conscious emotions*, which are crucial for understanding the social aspects of emotions and their relationships with feelings, behavior, actions, and thought – at times also referred to as "emotions of self-assessment" or "self-focused emotions." – they have not produced the expected results (G. Taylor, 1985; Niedenthal, Tangney, and Gavanski, 1994). While there is an abundance of empirical projects and studies, they appear incapable of answering the theoretical questions that supposedly have motivated them. It is true that there is an "emotion revolution" if we take into account the number of articles that have been published, but it is also necessary to take into account the growing number of empirical studies that report "no results". What seems to be an emotion revolution from one point of view is a theoretical crisis from another. Indeed, how can the numerous empirical studies of self-esteem produce any useful results when it is not clear what "self" is? And the same is true not only for self-conscious emotions, but for all emotions in light of the claim that "all the emotions are fundamentally social" (Fischer and Tangney, 1995, 3).

The self-conscious emotions, however, have been considered to be more social than the others. Of these, shame, guilt, pride, and embarrassment have received preferential treatment. However, an overview of the literature dealing with self-conscious emotions may create the impression that it is focused on either shame, or guilt, or both, while an analysis of the rest have only a subordinate function. This is certainly true for Fischer and Tangney's special volume on self-conscious emotions, which was meant to move the emotion revolution a few steps further and is particularly concerned with the four emotions mentioned above. The few articles on pride included in the volume make it clear that pride is the "other" of shame, and that its theoretical explanation to a great extent is contingent upon that of shame. The same impression is created by the small number of articles on embarrassment. The latter is presented as an emotion that cannot be analyzed outside of its relation to shame, and in some disciplinary perspectives a fine difference between the two emotions does not even exist (Lewis 1995, 212).

Furthermore, these articles clearly show that the problems encountered in the analysis of embarrassment are very similar to those encountered in the analysis of shame. As Miller indicates, one may prove that embarrassment is connected in some way with a sensitivity towards the opinion of others, but one may also prove that the experience of embarrassment is connected with one's own uncertainty and with a disruption of interaction rather than with a fear of an external negative evaluation (Miller, 1995, 323). The same also holds true for shame, for which there are at least two opposed theoretical explanations that find support in empirical studies. Both those who follow Darwin and insist that
the social nature of shame has social elicitors and is impossible to explain outside the relationship between self and other, as well as those who follow Tomkins and view shame as "an innate auxiliary affect and a specific inhibitor of continuing interest and enjoyment," find empirical support for their claims. None of these opposing claims in fact seems less true than the others (Tomkins, in Sedgwick and Frank, 1995, 134). Most importantly, the questions of what distinguishes shame and guilt, and whether or not they are truly different emotions, are as important and unsolvable as they have ever been.

Nevertheless, the importance of the efforts to subsume shame and guilt under the paradigm of self-conscious emotions cannot be exaggerated. They would indeed push the emotion revolution forward insofar as the introduction of this new class of emotions constitutes a break from the traditional hierarchical approaches that understand relationships between emotions only in terms of superordinate and subordinate categories. They have also brought to awareness the fact that shame and guilt, as no other emotions, are at the very heart of the emotion puzzle, which itself is the key to understanding individual, interpersonal, national, and international psychologies.

**Efforts at Classification**

Although emotions seem to be an area of study in which all people have knowledge and are natural experts – or perhaps precisely because of this – they appear to be one of the most complex phenomena that science deals with. After more than a hundred years of emotion studies, there is no single idea in the field that has gone unchallenged and is shared by all scholars. The situation is further complicated by the fact that both the humanities and the social sciences claim expertise in the field, even though they are divided by insurmountable differences in their respective approaches. Moreover, although emotions are embedded in living bodies and inseparable from them, they are also socially formed. One cannot study emotions without having knowledge of this process, which necessarily involves knowledge of the very society in which it takes place.

Unlike the natural sciences, which apparently have all sprung from one and the same root, the social sciences have never been united by one and the same paradigm, having instead arisen simultaneously from many different disciplinary roots. But in order for the social sciences to be able to produce truth, as do the other sciences, they should be able to provide a single and universally shared perspective, presumably by defining an observation position that all human beings may share. However, the ideal of a universally shared observation position is viewed as inconceivable in the case of the social sciences. This point has made philosophers question whether the social sciences might ever "grow up" and become "real" sciences by staking a legitimate claim to truth.

Viewed from this perspective, there are understandable reasons underlying efforts to elaborate emotion taxonomies. Furthermore, there can hardly be any
discussion about an "emotion revolution", or even of serious research, if it is still impossible to provide a clear and simple answer to such basic questions as What are emotions and feelings? How many emotions are there? and How are the various emotions and feelings related to each other? Classification is important in this regard since it suggests unifying principles and helps overcome long-lasting controversies and disagreements, which are particularly typical of emotion research. It is perhaps for this reason that investigating the relationships between different emotions and feelings and classifying their basic types, families, opposing and complementary pairings, and hierarchies has been one of the most prominent features of emotion research in the last fifty years.

In some hierarchies of categories, emotions have been divided into basic emotion families and *specific* emotions, on the one hand, and, on the other, *positive* and *negative* emotions. But although the distinction between basic and non-basic emotions seems to be intuitively clear, it has no firm theoretical foundation and discussions continue over which emotions are basic. And while the classification of emotions as positive or negative seems at first glance to be less problematic, this effort has also failed to acquire universal legitimacy in light of cultural differences and because different people may view one and the same emotion as both positive and negative.

For example, According to research based on cluster analysis for emotion words, love in China is considered to be a negative emotion (sad love), while in United States and Italy it is positive. Another interesting, but perhaps less surprising, finding is that shame and related emotions allow for classification as a basic emotion family in the example of China, while in United States and Italy it appears only as a specific emotion and subordinate member of the sadness emotion family (Fischer and Tangney, 1995, 12-13). What also should be taken into account is that shame has not always been perceived as a negative emotion, as modern scholars are accustomed to classifying it. From a socio-historical perspective, even in the history of our civilization shame was not always a quasi-virtue (Aristotle) and it was once valued positively with Aidos (the Greek word for shame) being worshiped as a God (Misheva, 2000, 45).

Emotions such as anger, sadness, fear, disgust, and surprise are considered to be well-established basic emotions. Classifying them has always been the least problematic since they all satisfy a number of criteria, including distinct emotional expression, physiology, automatic appraisal, rapid onset, brief duration, and so forth. However, even a quick overview of the relevant literature may convince one that shame and guilt are the emotions most difficult to classify, although for different reasons. Just like love, it is possible to classify shame as both positive and negative, and there also appears to be sufficient reasons to categorize it as both a basic and a non-basic emotion. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine whether shame is a separate emotion family or a subordinate category to other basic families. The problem is not that shame does not fit in any of the emotion classes but rather that there is hardly a class to
which it might not belong. In contrast, it is difficult to classify guilt because it seems unrelated to other emotions and has no emotional counterpart other than shame. The difficulty with classifying guilt is revealed by the fact that "(m)any textbooks on emotions do not cover guilt at all" (Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton, 1995, 255).

Self-conscious emotions are often neglected in research that especially deals with classification of basic emotions. For example, Ekman did not include shame, guilt, and embarrassment in his most recent book, which summarized his observations of emotions over a period of several decades. Ekman stated that shame, guilt, and embarrassment should remain as "candidate" basic emotions since they cannot even be distinguished from each other. Furthermore, they do not meet one of the important criteria for basic emotion, namely, having an efficient and universal signal that informs others about the individual's emotional state. It thus appears that the theory of emotions as adaptive mechanisms shaped in a process of natural selection has little validity in respect to self-conscious emotions since the last thing an ashamed or guilty individual would like to do is signal his emotional state to others. Ekman's hypothesis in this regard is that they are late evolutionary developments for which "there has not yet been enough time for an efficient signal to have been developed." Nevertheless, Ekman does not doubt "that embarrassment, guilt, shame, and envy are also emotions" and thus should have been included in his discussion but he did not do so since he himself did not research them (Ekman, 2003, 217).

Contrary to certain opinions, however, I do not find that it is a lack of research or methodological and ethical difficulties that "have plagued and retarded the empirical study of guilt" and other self-conscious emotions (Ekman, 2003, 257). A more plausible explanation is that efforts to study self-conscious emotions have been frustrated by the lack of a proper theory of self. How could it be possible to measure self-esteem, self-blame, self-appraisal, self-disgust, and so forth, when it is not clear what the self is and what its structure is? As Scheff and Fearon note, "atheoretical empiricism usually has a very limited application to complex human phenomena," such as emotions; moreover, "an enormous expenditure of time and effort" in such an undertaking brings disproportionately small, if any, findings (Scheff and Fearon, 2004, 74, 87). This has been said in particular about empirical studies of self-esteem, the number of which was estimated in 2004 as "at least fifteen thousand studies" (ibid, 74).

If shame and guilt are more social than other emotions, and if they are social constructions in this sense, questioning individuals about their past experiences will hardly lead researchers to discover the difference between shame and guilt. All that it can do is confirm that such qualitative differences really exist and that, no doubt, they have to be studied (Lindsay-Hartz, De Rivera, and Mascolo, 1995, 298). For example, if we are interested in the interpersonal aspects of guilt, the method of narrative studies used in individualistic psychology may well prove inadequate (Baumeister, Stillwell, and Heatherton, 1995, 255). Doing
so would amount to hoping that our respondents have already reflected sufficiently and have a rather good idea of what society is, how they have been socialized in it, and how their own selves have been constructed. All that would then be left is to make them share these ideas with us. An empirical survey cannot even provide an answer for why some people from a given culture react with rage to the shame experience while others do not. Respondents in empirical studies may prove or disprove researchers' hypotheses, but they can hardly provide the universally valid descriptions of emotions that researchers seek. It thus appears that focusing on the self-conscious emotions cannot by itself "move the revolution several steps forward" as long as the research approaches employed continue to draw inspiration from the same "individualistic psychology that de-emphasized the social foundation of human behavior," which it in fact was initially intentioned to overcome (Fischer and Tangney, 1995, 4).

For Darwin as for Nietzsche, the human being was the "animal with red cheeks." But while Darwin's ideas of natural evolution have not only guided emotion research for more than a century, but have also had enormous influence upon the establishment of social psychology as a discipline, they can hardly continue doing so. The reason is not that we must now challenge their basic principles or truths, but because the theory of social evolution cannot merely be a continuation of natural evolution. Social evolution involves a qualitative difference, namely, it is the evolution of the "linguistic animal" who has red cheeks only because he has a sense of self (Ch. Taylor, 1985, 97-105). And this is a difference that matters.

Is Shame or Guilt the Master Emotion?

From Darwin's anthropological perspective, shame was a much more interesting emotion than guilt. He apparently felt that the phenomena of blushing and shame represented a threat to his theory of evolution and natural selection insofar as they are what distinguishes human beings from animals, not what reveals them to be different branches of a common evolutionary tree. One of Darwin's goals was apparently to counter existing creationist interpretations which maintained that blushing and shame are God's punishment for a transgression of moral rules. Darwin argued that this could not be the case insofar as it does not explain why God chose not to sanction in a similar fashion the behavior of dark-skinned people, whose blushing is invisible to others. Darwin had little to say about guilt, however. While he first discussed guilt as a feeling distinct from shame that, as such, should have a different expression, he then appointed guilt as a moral cause of shame (Darwin, 1989, 260). It can be established in this regard that the problem of distinguishing between shame and guilt first occurred in Darwin's work, and that it has remained unresolved ever since. This fact has not gone unnoticed and Darwin has been often criticized for not being able to "distinguish between shame and guilt, or even between
shyness, embarrassment, and shame (Lewis, 1992, 23). Nevertheless, there have been no serious efforts to explore the root nature of this problem by scrutinizing its origin in Darwin's work.

Freud did not follow in Darwin's footsteps. He rather chose to elevate guilt from the subordinate position that it held in Darwin's work and promoted it to the status of the most important human emotion, which, furthermore, for Freud is the key to the deepest secrets of civilization, society, and humanity. And not only was the superior status of guilt unchallenged in subsequent research, but it acquired a dominant position in both research and therapeutic practice. There are more than one reasons for why Freud’s model of the self represented a path that sociology could not take. First of all, as an internal conflict between ego and superego, it represented a sort of Panopticon especially designed by civilization to control man’s violent impulses and suggested the idea that society is a correction of an inherently pathological human nature. At the same time, the status of shame in Freud's model was diminished to the point that shame virtually disappeared from view. Freud held that shame and guilt represented two stages in the constitution of the feeling of guilt rather than two separate emotions. Freud's attention was clearly focused on the emergence of guilt and on the role in civilization this feeling has played, not on the more exact identification of the preparatory phase that made it possible for guilt to appear "on stage." In Freud's conception shame could have been identified as an immature feeling of guilt, although it could also be argued when viewed from the opposite perspective that guilt is a mature shame feeling.

When shame was rediscovered in the second half of the twentieth century, it at first appeared as an equally important counterpart of guilt that was unjustly neglected in Freud's theory. Erikson maintained that the main reason why shame has been insufficiently studied resides in the particular nature of our civilization, in which shame was "so early and easily absorbed by guilt," not that it was less important or secondary feeling (Erikson, 1963, 252). Lynd argued in a similar vein that it was difficult to view shame as a separate feeling after it has been concealed by the more "modern" feeling of guilt, resulting in shame being "subsumed under, or neglected in, the study of guilt" (Lynd, 1958, 19).

Various works in the fields of anthropology, classical scholarship, and psychology have greatly contributed to the establishment of shame as the most important emotion. Borrowing inspiration from Ruth Benedict's pioneering study of shame-culture, some anthropologists' claim that the foundation of European civilization is a shame-driven ancient world from which our guilt-driven modern world somehow eventually developed. In classical scholarship, too, shame is viewed as the primary emotion, and there is even a conviction that understanding guilt first requires an understanding of its descriptive counterpart since guilt cannot understand itself; only shame, as an older feeling, can understand guilt. As Williams put it, "if we come to understand our shame, we may also better understand our guilt" (Williams, 1993, 93). But the question of
which emotion, shame or guilt, arose first, regardless of the Biblical story in which shame was the primary feeling, found no easy or immediate answer, not even in social psychology. In Erikson's discussion of the "Eight Ages of Man" in Childhood and Society, both shame and guilt belong to human childhood, although shame precedes guilt and is associated with the second "age of man" while guilt is associated with the third (Erikson, 1963, 251-55). Some psychologists claim, however, that both shame and guilt most likely "emerge at about the same time," and that "after the age of 2 children show both shame and guilt" (Lewis, 1992, 96). Nevertheless, the growing consensus of researchers that shame, rather than guilt, is the clue to interpreting personality, identity, and what it is to be human paralleled the growing public understanding that moral shame, not guilt, guarantees the survival of our civilization (Morrison, 1998, 15).

The difficulties in distinguishing between shame and guilt and in understanding the complex relation between them emerged as another problem. In Ruth Benedict's anthropological study of shame-culture we find the idea that "(i)n a culture where shame is a major sanction people are chagrined about acts which we expect people to feel guilty about" (Benedict, 1989, 222). On the other hand, certain psychologists claim that shame is transformed into guilt under certain circumstances, or that "(g)uilt is used to bypass shame, since it is a less acute emotion" (Lewis 1992, 121). There are those for whom shame and guilt are simply different foci of one and the same phenomenon that sometimes overlap and sometimes replace or stimulate each other (Lynd, 1961, 23). Yet another view is that shame and guilt are inseparable parts of one single emotion, namely, "shame-guilt" (Heller, 1985, 6).

It is interesting to note that the shift of attention from guilt to shame happened without Freud's theory of self being abolished or being replaced by another, shame-relevant theory. It rather appears that what were previously taken to be guilt experiences were re-examined and re-described in terms of shame feelings. Psychotherapists came to realize the preponderance of shame over guilt feelings, and they began identifying cases with a total absence of true guilt conflict, such as by adolescent youth, interpreting them as "regressive processes in the superego and ego" (Jacobson, 1964, 208). It thus appears that psychotherapy as a practice was not dependent in any significant way on using the concept of guilt to explain human behavior.

The change that the new turn in research produced can clearly be seen first of all in the fact that experiences which were previously discussed in terms of guilt feelings acquired a new label and began to be identified as shame (Smedes, 1993, 3ff.).

For Tomkins, it was not guilt that was the most important feeling, but rather shame because, among other things, "shame strikes deepest into the heart of man (Tomkins, in Sedgwick and Frank, 1995, 133). At the same time, he clearly stated that he is using the word shame where others would have used guilt.
Consequently, what the child feels when lectured by a parent on being bad and "hangs his head in acknowledgment of his immorality" is no longer identified distinguished as guilt, but rather as shame (Tomkins, in Sedgwick and Frank, 1995, 142). When Tomkins could detect no significant difference between shame and guilt on the level of affect, he considered them to be one and the same negative affect, namely, shame-humiliation, which encompasses such other feelings as shyness and is linked with love and identification (ibid., 133-34). He suggested that shame is a broader term than guilt because it includes the moral aspects that guilt has, while guilt is incapable of covering the rich meaning of shame (ibid., 143). But guilt could nevertheless not be completely subsumed under the shame-humiliation affect. To cope with this problem, Tomkins distinguished yet another negative affect linked with individuation and hate, namely, contempt-disgust, to which one form of guilt, identified as internalized contempt, was delegated (Tomkins, in Sedgwick and Frank, 1995, 139, 144). Guilt was thereby dissected and split into two parts that were classified under other psychologically more significant emotions.

Shame became a complex, compound feeling in Tomkins' theory, with guilt being diminished in status to a comparatively superficial emotion that does not strike sufficiently deep into the heart of man to serve as the primary cause of man's unhappiness. It was thus no longer guilt, as it was for Freud, but rather shame that was a "sort of malaise," a painful "inner torment," and a "sickness of the soul" (Compare Freud, 1962, 135-136, and Tomkins, in Sedgwick and Frank, 1995, 133).

Many experiences that previously were discussed in terms of guilt now came to be identified as shame feelings. Shame came to complement and even replace guilt in virtually all possible respects, taking over almost all the territories that had been occupied by guilt. In psychiatry shame came to be viewed as an untypical but possible cause for classical depression, which previously had been typically related to guilt. This in turn led to the conclusion that "shame and guilt may have different biological origins" (Nathanson, 1992, 22). "Overly responsible people" became "leading candidates for shame" in contradiction with those philosophical traditions that had consistently associated guilt with the emergence of responsibility, conscience, and duty. Moreover, when shame acquired a status superior to that of guilt, it acquired a certain moral status as well. For example, people's urge to blame themselves for events for which they could not possibly have had any responsibility was interpreted as shame at being inferior and unworthy (Smedes, 1993, 18). It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that today there is no guilt-related experience that cannot be described or explained in terms of shame.

The micro-sociological work of Thomas Scheff, which is in accord with the opinion of psychologists, describes guilt as "one of the many types of affect belonging to the shame family." It is therefore a feeling that requires neither a separate study, nor even a separate theory (Scheff, 1990, 17). Scheff is also
convinced, just as is Tomkins, that "shame is the master emotion," with guilt having only a subordinate role as a particular type of moral shame (Scheff, 1997, 12). But although his theory of social bonds, which draws on the work of Cooley and Goffman, was particularly designed to explain the emotion of shame, it still needs a complementary aspect that indicates how social bonds also cause guilt feelings. For example, what bonds are threatened if a student feels guilt for having not studied enough and failing an exam? What bonds are threatened by feeling guilty for not helping a stranger on the street who is being robbed in front of your eyes?

This brief presentation of changes in perspective concerning relationships between shame and guilt is perhaps sufficient to support the claim that it is now guilt that has been neglected in the study of shame. It also reveals that the relationships between shame and guilt are not at all clear. They may be described in a wide range of ways, such as opposition, complementarity, hierarchy, and so forth, depending on the purpose and desire of the interpreter. However, this type of development does not resemble a revolutionary movement forward, as some authors have suggested. It instead creates the impression that we are observing a cyclical development, not progress, whereby guilt and shame alternate roles as master and subordinate emotions. Perhaps the only shortcomings with Freud's psychological theory of guilt and Scheff's sociological theory of social bonds is that the one cannot address shame as such while the other cannot address guilt either. The reason for this state of affairs is that the social sciences do not have yet a socio-psychological theory that is sufficiently complex to simultaneously explain both shame and guilt. Moreover, the relationship between shame and guilt, unlike that of shame/pride, for example, has both synchronic and diachronic aspects, and any theory intended to explain the shame-guilt phenomenon must be able to tackle them both.

### Shame and Guilt in a Sociological Socio-Psychological Perspective

Even a brief overview of the steadily growing number of disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies of emotions reveals that the name of the father of symbolic interactionism, George Herbert Mead, who is also the author of one of the most developed and sophisticated theories of social self, is seldom mentioned, if not completely absent, from the list of references. The fact is that the potential of his work for providing the explanatory framework that is at present lacking has never been considered. Mead's name is also omitted from the works of Thomas Scheff, who built his theory for explaining self-conscious emotions on the works of Cooley even though he himself acknowledged that "sociological social psychology is derived from the work of Mead (1934)" (Scheff, 2006, 19). This is not to say that Cooley's work is irrelevant for the task that Scheff undertook. It is just that the micro-foundation for his explanatory framework that Scheff sought to construct on the "shoulders of Cooley" does not seem capable of carrying such weight.
Both Cooley and Mead are important figures in symbolic interactionism, and they both have quite distinct and suggestive theories of self. But while Cooley focuses on the micro-psychological aspects of the social construction of "I", or the subject part of the self, in a process of social interaction that takes place within a primary social group, Mead instead focuses his analysis on the construction of its complementary part – the "me". In Mead's analysis, the "me" is the objective self that is the self of a role-player, and it makes possible social cooperation and participation in a game. Furthermore, Mead views the "I" as the primary self that is constructed in play. While both selves, "I" and "me", are social, it is apparent that "I" is primary insofar as there is no "me" without an "I". Stated otherwise, there is no object-self without a subject-self.

Cooley's work provides a much more developed analysis if one wishes to investigate the nature of the "I" but he uses a highly metaphorical language that lacks the philosophical sophistication of Mead's. This does not mean that it is inferior, as some of Cooley's interpreters have assumed, only that it is different and relevant to the task it undertakes. The "I" in Cooley's analysis is the social form of an emotional content that has no form at the birth of the human being. Cooley calls this "I" a social self-feeling. It is also a "looking glass self," or a self that is bound to and dependent upon the opinions of others about the self. As Scheff observed, Cooley's self is a most appropriate theoretical model for an explanation of the shame experience. However, Cooley's model cannot explain how this self, which is dependent on the socializer – the primary group or the "we" – acquires its individuality and breaks out of the bonds in which it is held by the group. There is thus no place for guilt neither in Cooley's nor in Scheff's model, which relies entirely on Cooley. Scheff consequently had to bury guilt beneath shame, just as post-Freudean psychologists have suggested.

Scheff's new book on Goffman, *Goffman Unbound!*, which gave him the opportunity to read Cooley from Goffman's perspective, reveals further difficulties associated with using Cooley's model without qualification. For example, Cooley's experience of the "I"- self proceeds in an unconscious manner, which renders it incapable of tackling self-conscious emotions. It can thus fully address neither guilt, nor shame. As a result, Cooley's self cannot explain the "feeling trap," or that special experience in which the consciousness of being ashamed produces further shame in an endless progression that leads to the complete paralysis of body and thought.

Mead's model is indeed more developed, but by itself it is not sufficient to explain the complex relationship between shame and guilt. Emotions are not part of the picture for Mead, much as was the case for Freud. He also views feelings as being conscious, much as Freud and Goffman do. The guarantee for consciousness is the very subject-object model of the self, which is a self that makes possible both conscious feelings and thought. Mead's "me" is comprised of the internalized attitudes of the others towards self, but others can never observe the "I" as it is, or as the subject himself experiences it. All that others
can see is an "I" in a role. Consequently, when their attitudes towards the individual are expressed and internalized, they become part of the "me." "Me" is that part of the self that is always in a role, such as "me-the-friend," "me-the-child," "me-the-parent," "me-the-grandfather," "me-the-policeman," and so forth. None of these object selves is a true self, instead being reflections of the "masks" by means of which the individual presents himself to the other and through which he communicates with the other. A wound to any of these object selves or "me"-selves does not hurt, but such is not the case with the "I"-self. The latter is exposed to all types of dangers in its relations with other "I"s because it has no protection shield and thus all its relations are unmediated. This "I" is the "I" of a member of those groups from which the individual derives his primary identity and in which he comes into direct relationships with other group members.

With these theoretical considerations in mind, an explanation for what shame and guilt are from a socio-psychological point of view can now be proposed.

Shame is the emotion that is experienced by the "I" or the subject-self when it is challenged. This challenge does not necessarily constitute a threat that bonds with other people may be severed, although this may well occur. It is rather, in more general terms, a threat to the preservation or maintenance of the social status that the "I" has in the group. The individual "I" is not there by birth and it is not a personal achievement but rather it is granted to the individual as a mark of his recognition as a group member. The "I" thus is not acquired but given, it is an identity which can be taken away from the individual. person u aneeds constant confirmation Any change or threat of change in this position, which is experienced as a status loss, can cause shame. This hypothesis is also capable of explaining the case of pride and even honor, yet another opposite of shame as well a counter-example to the theory of social bonds. For example, one may have secure bonds but this does not guarantee that one will have a sense of pride. One may be ashamed for belonging to a group and even for having secure bonds with it. Also, people do not experience shame when they are honored at the expense of losing their existing social bonds, such as when a peasant is selected by the crowd to be king. The king thus chosen may be sad over the dramatic loss of relationships with his primary group, but this change of status will hardly make him feel shame.

To sum up. The concept of social bond is too simple or one-dimensional to explain shame especially in its relationship with other self-conscious emotions. It provides only for the difference between being a member of the group and being threatened with exclusion from the group, having secure bonds and having threatened bonds. The concept of status covers the meaning of social bond by providing for the distinction between two different statuses – member/not member. Besides this inside/outside difference, however, the concept of social status allows for a distinction between higher and lower statuses or central and
Peripheral positions which acquisition or loss may also cause a sense of shame or pride.

But neither can the feeling of guilt be explained by the theory of social bonds, however far we might stretch it, as was noted above. The rich man who feels guilt when passing a beggar in rags does not do so because of threatened social bonds, but rather for completely different reasons. My hypothesis in this regard is that guilt is a feeling – but not an emotion – towards the object self which Mead called “me.” It indicates a problem that I term role conflict. Guilt in this sense is caused whenever a conflict emerges between two roles that the individual is playing, or more precisely, between the duties and responsibilities attached to these different roles. I will maintain that guilt is the most probable outcome whenever an individual plays contradictory roles. It does not arise simply from bad actions towards another, and thus does not involve simply a moral consideration. It rather is a contradiction within the "me" that can be overcome only by an action that resolves the conflict between the particular roles in question and harmoniously realigns them. A good example in this regard taken from the world of media is the journalist who advertises new automobiles in the morning and reports on a campaign against pollution in the afternoon.

Guilt is a perplexing and unpleasant feeling that confuses an actor's sense of duty, purpose, and his role-attitude, but it does not threaten the “I.” That is why the core self, the agent of action, remains intact and undisturbed. The explanation of shame and guilt and the clear distinction between the two feelings is thus, in my view, immediately related to the further elaboration of the sociological theory of social selves and the linking together of the works of Simmel, Cooley, and Mead.

Old sociological theories that have become sociological classics, such as Mead's, do not age. They are rather “treasures” that maintain their value regardless of the advance of time. Sociology in this regard is not much different from poetry, literature, or any work of art. What brings her close to poetry is the same ancient and old-fashioned method that she employs, namely, the method of naked-eye observation, including self-observation subsumed recently under the term second-order cybernetics. There are no better methods for theoretical explorations of the microsocial world of unmediated and mediated human relations where shame and guilt belong. That is why the study of such a complex phenomenon as the human being, as well as the production of generalized knowledge, can never be the task of one discipline only, not even a purely scientific endeavor.

References


INTIMITET SOM GRUPPFENOMEN? – EN RELATIONELL TOLKNING AV GRUPPSJÄLEN

Jessica Mjöberg


grupper finner vi i socialpsykologins förhistoria omfattande undersökningar av grupper och hur dessa på olika vis starkt påverkade sina medlemmar på sätt som påminner om intimitet. Dessa undersökningar finner vi främst i vad som kan kallas group-mind-traditionen (Reicher, 2001).

Uppslaget för denna text är att dessa två idéer, group-mind-traditionen och intimiteten så som den presenteras här, visar ett möjligt släktskap genom att de båda balanserar på gränsen mellan det individuella och det kollektiva, mellan det personliga och det gemensamma; en gräns som ofränkomligen leder oss till en diskussion om centrala socialpsykologiska frågeställningar om temporalitet, närhet och distans, ensamhet och gemenskap.


**Georg Simmel om intimitet**

Att intimitet framförallt förknippas med parrelationer är inte att förvånas över om vi utgår från Georg Simmels analys av hur antalet deltagare i en grupp bestämmer dess karaktär. I Simmels analys får nämligen *dyaden* den mest framträdande positionen då den utgör den enklaste och mest fundamentala sociala relationen. Sociologiskt sett finns det inte någon mindre eller mer grundläggande social enhet än den som uppstår mellan två personer (Simmel, 1902). Dyadens unika karaktär bygger framförallt på att de två personer som ingår i relationen står i en direkt och ömsesidigt beroendelighet till varandra. De förblir i en ”till varandra hänvisadvaro” (Simmel, 1992[1908]:104); om den upphör, upphävs även själva dyaden (I den svenska översättningen översätts Aufeinander-Angewiesenseins med ”inom det ömsesidiga beroendets gränser” (Simmel 1981:164). I den översättningen förloras en del av Simmels betoning på det ständiga blivandet och skapandet av sociala situationer. En mer korrekt översättning skulle kunna vara att stanna i en till varandra hänvisadvaro, något som både täcker in vikten av det mänskliga varats sociala dimension och det ständiga skeendet). På så sätt verkar Simmels dyadiska relation i sin fullständiga innebörd utgöra ett socialt responsorium (Asplund, 1987). Relationen är fullständigt beroende av sina båda enskilda personernas ständiga upprätthållande av relationen och deras sammanflätning av svar och gensvar på varandras handlingar.
Som delar av en dyad är alltså båda personerna individuellt och unikt behövda för att relationen ska bestå. Denna speciella relationella bindning är i Simmels analys förutsättningen för och själva uttrycket för intimitet (Simmel, 1981). Redan vid steget från två till tre deltagare i en grupp förändras dess karaktär fundamentalt. Så fort en grupp består av fler än två personer bildas en överindividuell enhet genom en idé om ett ”vi” som är oberoende av de specifika medlemmarna. Denna idé utgör i sig ytterligare en komponent i relationen samtidigt som möjligheten för den större gruppen att falla sönder i mindre dyader uppstår. Medan dyaden som är beroende av båda personernas uppmärksamhet mot varandra inte kan hållas vid liv om den riktade uppmärksamheten mot varandra försvinner kan grupper på tre eller fler personer alltid fortsätta att existera även om en enskild persons uppmärksamhet riktas åt ett annat håll. Den unika position som den enskilde personen har skiljer sig därmed markant beroende på om den är i en grupp på två, eller i en grupp bestående av flera personer. Att stå i en unik position gentemot varandra är också det som får Simmel att formulera dyadens intima karaktär:


sig åt, att vissa är intima, och andra inte. Vissa relationer får karaktären av att bli något mer än summan av sina enskilda delar, medan andra inte får det.

Upplevelsen som personer i en intim relation har av att deras relation är unik behöver från denna ståndpunkt inte vara sann. Troligtvis är det till och med så att många av de relationer som upplevs som unika, i stort sett är identiska med många andra relationer av liknande karaktär. Men återigen är det av vikt att poängtera att intimitetens betydelse inte ligger i det utifrån betraktande faktum om relationen faktiskt är unik, utan snarare i att internt uppleva relationen som baserad på det som i varje individ enskilda liv särskiljer relationen från andra relationer. Med denna distinktion mellan intima och andra relationer som en skilljelinje mellan unika och allmänna relationer ser jag en möjlighet att finna intimitet även bortom dyaden. Om intimitet utgörs av den interna tendensen att värdera det unika i relationen, att vi blir till det vi är i relation till varandra, borde samma förhållningssätt kunna användas även i sammanhang med fler än två deltagare.


Även om denna diskussion om intimitet som form snarare än innehåll tillåter att inte alla dyader blir intima så är intimiteten ändå för Simmels bunden till dyaden som numerisk grupp, eftersom formen uppstår genom dyadens förutsättningar ömsesidig hänvisadvaro och frånvaron av en överindividuell enhet. Men just här kan Simmels analys av dyaden kännas ofullständig. Med fokus på hänvisadvaron mot varandra blir den intima relationen en relation som kräver ständig uppmärksamhet på sig själv – en ständig närvaro i netet. Om intimitet är berorande av att de två personerna som utgör den intima dyaden enbart får rikta sig mot varandra så kan de bara finnas i ett ständigt här och nu,
temporärt bundna till nuet, eller i ett ständigt återkommande nu. Den intima innebörden är alltså förbunden med att stanna i ett oförmedlat ögonblick av ömsesidig hänvisadvaro mot varandra. Detta ter sig i längden vara lika omöjligt som att i Meads teori av självet som bestående av ett jag och ett mig ständigt vara i ett jag (Mead, 1934). (Hos Mead kan vi om samspellet mellan I och Me utifrån en temporal aspekt läsa att ”The ‘I’ of this moment is present in the ‘me’ of the next moment. I cannot turn around quick enough to catch myself. I become a ‘me’ in so far as I remember what I said” (Mead, 1934:174).

För även om vi kan tänka oss ett närvarande förhållningssätt som ser en utsträckt tid som ständigt kommande nu-tillfällen, där vi ska vara fullständigt närvarande i varje enskilt nu så innebär varje tanke om ett senare tillfälle, varje planering, att tappa en del av närvaron i nuet. Tankarna framåt skapar också en överindividuell idé om ett vi, och i det blir bådas tankar och kommunikation ett ”tredje” i relationen. Om detta säger Simmel:

Det är karaktäristiskt för grupperingar med två personer, att en sådan tredje part, som föreningens båda subjekt själva ger upphov till, undanträger intimitetens mest intima innebör (Simmel, 1981:166).


I genomläsningen av Simmels analys av intimitet framkommer framförallt två svårigheter. Den första svårigheten finner vi i att intimitet inte verkar möjligt att uppnå mer än momentant. Den andra svårigheten ligger i att det överindividuella, tredje, som förintar intimitetens ofranomligt uppstår i alla varaktiga relationer. Den relationella form av intimitet som utpräglat kan återfinnas inom dyaden finns knappt ens där utifrån dessa problem. Sina begränsningar till trots är Simmels analys av intimitetens form som relationell form välformulerad och vi ska nu ta den vidare till den fråga som står i centrum för denna analys, nämligen hur vi kan förstå intimitet i grupper med fler än två personer. För att övergå från dyaden till större grupperingar finner vi redan i Simmels analys glidningar av innebörden av intimitetens form: ” För intim böner av gemenskap gäller att inga tomrum tillåts mellan personerna. De måste vara ’täta’ och vi får i dem inte kunna känna oss ensamma” (Simmel,
Denna glidning bort från dyadens intimitet till en grupp-intimitet finner vi fortsatt i Simmels formulering: ”Ju mer omfattande en gemenskap är, desto lättare bildar den å ena sidan en objektiv enhet över de enskilda, och desto mindre intim blir den å den andra; dessa båda drag hänger ömsesidigt samman” (Simmel, 1981:166). Här finns i Simmels analys en öppning för intimitet i större sammanhang även om den inte kan vara lika stark som i dyaden. En fråga att ta vidare i vår analys är därför hur Simmels idé om intimitet förstått som en socialitetsform känntecknad av hänvisadvaro till varandra, tättbygd och gemenskap kan utvidgas till att även omfatta större grupperingar.

**Gruppens själ som en form av gruppintimitet?**


I Sartres distinktion mellan grupper och serier ryms den mer traditionella distinktionen mellan gruppen från **aggregatet** förstått som en samling människor samlade på samma plats vid samma tidpunkt respektive **sociala kategorier** förstått som människor med någon gemensam egenskap eller gemensamt öde (Gitter, 1952). Här skulle dessa kollektiv klassas som serier, inte för att personerna saknar en gemensam uppgift, utan snarare p.g.a. deras inbördes icke-relationer till varandra. Sartres distinktion har även fler fördelar jämfört med andra definitioner. Här finns nämligen också en dynamik genom möjligheten för
serier att övergå i grupper och grupper att övergå i serier (J. P. Sartre, 1976). Denna Sartres distinktion av gruppens socialitet är också förenlig med Simmels formulering av intimitet, när det gäller viken av att skilja mellan att betrakta personers relationer som inre eller yttre i relation till varandra.

Sartre klassas sällan som socialpsykolog (För några exempel se dock (Goffman, 1959) och (Jensen & Vestergaard, 1979)). För att återgå till mer klassiska socialpsykologiska forskningsinsatser ska vi nu titta på några idéer från socialpsykologins vetenskapliga begynnelse. Under denna inledande period söktes en förståelse av gruppens karaktär av att vara något annat än enbart summan av dess individuella medlemmar. Framförallt sökte de svar på hur det kommer sig att vissa grupper blir så täta att de tycks sluka sina medlemmar i så hög grad att de förlorar sin individualitet. Det socialpsykologiska grundantagandet att vi blir oss själva genom att vara tillsammans med andra komplicerades här med risken att vi också kan förlora oss själva i en större helhet. Det kanske mest kända exemplet är Gustave LeBons teori om massans psykologi:

Under certain given circumstances, and only under those circumstances, an agglomeration of men presents new characteristics very different from those of the individuals composing it. The sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes. A collective mind is formed, doubtlessly transitory, but presenting very clearly defined characteristics (LeBon, 1982[1895]:1f)

I försöken att svara på de till synes gåtfulla frågorna om relationen mellan grupp och individ tilldelades gruppen en organisk karaktär, som om den hade ett liv, en själ och ett medvetande utöver sina enskilda medlemmar. LeBon fann denna gruppsjäl i den oorganiserade massan (LeBon, 1982[1895]) medan William McDougall menade att alla högt organiserade grupper bar på en kollektiv själ där individerna agerar som om de vore en kollektiv individ (McDougall, 1921:55f). Gemensamt för dessa teorier var att de satte ord på den organiska karaktär som gruppen ansågs besitta och på den överindividuella kraft som påverkade individerna att bete sig annorlunda än om de varit ensamma. (I denna text representeras denna tradition av LeBon och McDougall framförallt utifrån deras gemensamma intressen. För en mer kritisk och särskiljande analys av traditionen se (Bogardus, 1964:457ff)). Teorierna om gruppens egen agens och medvetande avfärdades dock när socialpsykologin övergick i en experimentell vetenskap genom framförallt Floyd Allports uttalande att grupper i sig inte existerar utan att det enbart är dess enskilda och samlade individer som existerar och som socialpsykologer bör studera – om socialpsykologin ska vara en vetenskap (Allport, 1924). Denna vändning av socialpsykologin gör att Stephen Worchel med rätta kan anmärka:
There is a certain surreal quality when venturing into the realm of collective/group behavior. One has the feeling of walking over hallowed ground that has been discovered by ones ancestors, but studiously avoided by those who followed (Worchel, 2003:480)


På spaning efter den intima gruppen

Vid det här laget vet vi att varken alla relationer eller alla grupper präglas av den relationella nyans som intimitet innebär. Den fråga som driver analysen vidare är dock om de relationer som är intima relationer och de grupper som är tätta och präglade av samhörighet kan förstås som olika uttryck för samma relationella förhållningssätt. Genom två exempel på grupper som på olika sätt karaktäriseras som tät och präglade av samhörighet är det nu dags att föra in intimitet i gruppen för att se vad som skulle kunna vara intima grupper och hur intimitet gör sig synlig i dessa.

Fotbollslaget som en intim grupp


Med en relationell analys blir ett lag alltså intimt, uppnår status av en tät grupp, när spelarna betraktar sig själva som del av laget, laget som beroende av dem och sig själva som beroende av laget. I detta tillstånd är överskridandet av sig själv som tydligast, jag är den jag är i laget och laget är det vad det är i relation av (bland annat) mig. Den intima kvaliteten uppstår genom bekraftelse genom inbördes beroenden av varandra, att stå i en gemensam situation, med tyngdpunkt på att vara en del av en relationell helhet.

För att intimitet som en relationsform ska uppstå krävs visserligen en ömasesidighet som består i att vara relationellt unika för varandra. Då laget, i sin överindividuella form, inte finns som en konkret entitet utanför sina enskilda spelare som den enskilde spelaren kan ingå en dyad med, kan det vara på sin plats att fundera över hur denna unika relationella position kan uppstå, och hur laget kan stå i hänvisadvaro till den enskilde spelaren. Om vi utgår från varje enskild spelare bör vi inte tänka oss att spelaren har dyadiska relationer till de andra respektive spelarna, inte heller ett dyadiskt förhållande till bollen. Dessa

Den täthet och känsla av gemenskap som intimitet innebär i gruppsammanhang behöver alltså enligt denna relationella tolkning inte innebära en mystisk överindividuell enhet som styr sina spelare. I det intima fotbollslaget är laget inte ett tredje, som kan komma emellan två enheter, utan snarare den andre mot vilken varje spelares dyadiska relation uppstår. Tätheten kan uppstå just genom att inte falla in i dyader inom gruppen utan istället låta gruppen vara den andra parten och därigenom skapa jämna relationella mellanrum mellan individerna så att inga tomrum uppstår (Det är också möjligt att utifrån Simmels intimitetsbegrepp skriva en relationell tolkning av fotbollsmatchen som en dyadisk relation mellan två lag som ingår en intim relation till varandra. I en sådan skrivning skulle de enskilda spelarna få en minimal roll i relation till de två lagen. I denna text har relationen mellan enskilda personer i samspel varit mer centralt, därför har jag koncentrerat mig på ett lag i detta exempel.). Viktigt att komma ihåg i denna diskussion är dock den dynamik som finns inbyggd i det relationella synsättet som innebär att gruppen relationellt (kan) förändras över tid. Om spelarna börjar betrakta laget från yttre faktorer som att få en bra plats i serien eller att jämföra årets resultat med tidigare år blir synen extern och förlorar sin intima form. På så sätt kan fotbollslaget som alla grupper i Sartres analys skifta mellan de relationella förmerna grupp och serie.

**Supportrarna som intim grupp**

Om fotbollslaget passar med McDougalls gruppsjäl kan dess supportrar ses som en grupp som stämmer väl på det gruppsedvetande LeBon fann i massan. Även om supportrarna kan vara medlemmar i en medlemsorganisation är det, liksom för fotbollslaget, under en specifik match som ett skeende som vårt intresse för dem som grupp finns. Som besökare på arenan finner vi supportrarna som en oorganiserad massa av människor utan tydlig struktur eller klar uppgift. Supportrarna som grupp är på det hela taget tillfällig i såväl struktur som tid och har en passiv roll i relation till det de åskådar. När något händer som får supportrarna att ”röra sig som en kollektiv individ” sker det oplanerat och fullständigt temporärt, men till synes samspelt och det är i denna samspelthet som vi finner drag av intimitet.

För att se massan som grupp krävs en höjd blick. På grund av sin omfattning är massan inte möjlig att uppfatta annat än som helhet. Om vi fäster blicken på enskilda personer eller grupperingar ser vi endast dem, som inte har någon egentlig inre relation till varandra. De är del av samma situation men ändå inte i
en gemensam situation och därmed fullständigt seriella. På detta sätt är varje enskild individ inte riktad mot någon annan enskild deltagare. Än mer tydligt än i fotbollslaget är hänvisadvaro i massan riktad mot helheten och situationen. Det innehållsiga som karaktäriserar massan skulle kunna beskrivas som ett arbete för att inte förlora sin plats i massan som är i rörelse, att inte hamna utanför. Att hålla helheten intakt är den centrala uppgiften och präglar dess inbördes relationer (Denna relationella aspekt, att förhålla sig till massan som om man är en nödvändig del av den och med en övergripande (ommedveten) strävan att ej hamna utanför kan liknas vid LeBons analyser av hur känslor smittar av sig och sprider sig inom en massa (LeBon, 1982:9)).

Den position som den enskilda individen har i massan är därmed inte heller unik. Den enskilde personen har ingen särskild uppgift i relation till helheten. Alla enskilda individer är likadana och utbytbara och därmed seriella. För att förstå detta relationella förhållningssätt kan vi med en generös översättning av hänvisadevaron i massan finna drag av intimitet. Om vi kan tolka om den totala hänvisadevaron till den andra till att istället vara en ömsesidig och jämn fördelning av uppmärksamhet till alla kan massan ses som intimitet. Om vi kan tolka om om den ingen av dess deltagare riktar mer uppmärksamhet mot någon enskild annan än någon annan. Relationen är direkt mellan individen och helheten; att inte sticka ut, att inte vara unik, eller att bekräftas genom att vara identisk med alla andra som är delar i helheten blir individens relation till gruppen.

Eftersom massan är öppen för alla och bara blir mer av sig själv ju fler deltagare den får minskar kontakten mellan deltagarna mer och mer för varje ny deltagare. Ett spännande drag hos massan som grupp, betraktad relationellt inifrån, är att det är svårt att avgöra om massan har möjlighet att relationellt bli intim, eller om massan i sig är sin kvalitet genom att vara en massiv kvantitet och serialitet. I sin helt oorganiserade form ger den en öppning av intimitet i form av varat i nuet, i ett utsträckt nu. Närvaron i stunden och därmed frånvaron av vad som kommer sedan ger massan en rörelse och en inbördes anpassning som delar av massan, vilket påminner om den intima närvaron i nuet. Men det kvarstår ändå att de enskilda personerna i relation till varandra är fullkomligt seriella. Den närhet som kan uppstå i massan är därför kanske inte intimitet i egentlig mening utan snarare en form av distanserad närhet, en närhet utan kontakt.

Avslutande diskussion - Intimitet som en relationell kvalitet

Denna text har haft två syften, först och främst att utmana förståelsen av intimitet som kopplad till dyader. Sekundärt och avhängigt gruppen som det fält där intimiten tillämpats, har varit att nytolka holistiska socialpsykologiska idéer från vad som idag av många anses ligga i socialpsykologins förhistoria. Förslaget till nytolkning av dessa idéer finner vi i en relationell analys. Svaren på de frågor som ställts i texten har vuxit fram genom en diskussion av olika
förståelser av intimitet och grupper, framförallt genom de två exempel som ges på vad som skulle kunna vara intima grupper.


En relationell analys tillåter även en *dynamik* i förståelsen av sociala relationer, då det här finns utrymme för att det sociala skene det dels i nuet, dels genom att relationer övertid skiftar form från intim till icke intim, från serie till grupp. Det ger en möjlig förståelse av varför inte alla dyader blir intima trots att de har de strukturella förutsättningarna, samtidigt som det ger en förståelse av hur grupper kan bli intima trots att dess deltagare inte kan stå i en dyadisk, i betydelsen total riktad hänvisadvaro, mot varandra som enskilda subjekt.


Referenslista


CAREER RETIREMENT, ROLE EXIT, AND IDENTITY CONCERNS

Jonas Stier

1. The Matter

Try not to become a man of success but rather try to become a man of value.
(Albert Einstein)

On the international tennis circuit, players become professional at a very young age. Being a professional player can be viewed as a potent social role. At the same time, the majority of players eventually ‘retire’ before the age of thirty-five (and many earlier). Such a ‘retirement’ in early adulthood presumably has implications for these people’s identity. This assumption, in addition to the limited availability of research on the transition from a young amateur locally to a successful tennis player at the international level, and from an active career to a life as an ‘ex’, make these people interesting for social psychological research. Similarly, with few exceptions (e.g. Carlsson 1987; Patriksson 1995; Stråhlman 1997, socialisation into and withdrawal from professional sport and its identity-implications for those involved have not been frequently investigated.

Against this background, a research project on career construction and the impact of pro-life and role exit on personal identity was conducted between the years 2002 and 2006 (see Stier 2005/2006). This text elaborates merely the part of the project investigating role exit – with the objective of presenting a number of theoretically generalisable conclusions about the identity implications of withdrawing from the role of a professional tennis player. Specifically, the aim is to explore experiences of role exit and identity among eight former tennis players, today in their thirties and forties, and to unravel mechanisms of role exit and their identity implications. This is done by focusing on how they themselves depict their career-withdrawal and its repercussions for them personally.

2. Theoretical angle

Social roles are well-known social psychological territories. Role theory holds that human behaviour is not random, nor meaningless. By prescribing social expectations, obligations and positions in the social structure, social roles make it predictable and meaningful (see e.g. Stephan & Stephan 1985). Every person adheres to an array of distinct, situational and dynamic roles, negotiated in social interplay and social functionality depends on the ability of role-alternation. To paraphrase Goffman (1959), a person’s set of roles adheres to a
role-kit, which is an integral aspect of his/her personal and social identity (Stier 1998/2003). Hence, significant – and particularly undesired – role changes are perceived as threats to one’s identity (Blau 1972).

By the same token, identity and identity transition are traditional objects of interest for sociological social psychology (see Stier 1998/2003). Within the realms of social space, identities are construed and infused with meaning (Goffman 1959). Drawing from Stier (1998), identities are viewed as dynamic interactional ‘products’, formed and transformed in social interplay. With this said, the ex-players’ identities are conceptualised as meaningful configurations, whose parts are arranged according to their perceived degree of salience (a concept used by Stryker, 1987). As such, they locate the interviewees in the social structure.

Interconnections between social roles and identities (collective and personal) are complex and ambiguous. McCall and Simmons (1966) suggest that any given identity is firmly attached to one or several roles, and that an individual’s role-identity is the basis for social interplay. With this said, an individual’s set of roles – role kit – is essential to his identity (Stier 1998). And social roles pertain to those domains of social space where people’s identities are enacted. At the same time, identities are believed to be affected by such role-performances. Whereas roles are made up by social expectations, derivable from certain positions in the social structure, identities – though influenced by these positions – have an existential and more ‘personal’ character.

Since identities are formed in sociocultural space, in relation to existing social roles, leaving this space inevitably has identity consequences – an assumption echoes Fuchs Ebaugh’s (1988) words that Western culture entails an awareness of or even preoccupation with ex-statuses and previous roles. This movement in social space and withdrawal from a social role is known as role exit, a social process that is as basic to social behaviour as socialisation or social interaction (ibid). She defines role exit as:

The process of disengagement from a role that is central to one’s self-identity and the reestablishment of an identity in a new role that takes into account one’s ex-role constitutes the process I call role exit. (p. 1).

Sociologists have studied role exit in the light of divorce, occupational turnover, unemployment, cults (Lofland 1966), deviant careers, migration etc. Significant contributions in the field were made by Blau (1972), who introduced the concept of role exit, and Allen and Vliert (1984), who conducted a series of case studies on role transitions (see Fuchs Ebaugh 1988). Yet linkages between role exit, ex-statuses and current identity remain insufficiently explored. Much sociological research on role exit has focused on ‘needy’ people, whereas role exits and identity concerns of the rich and successful largely have been ignored.
Yet, listening to the voices of the wealthy provides valuable insights into the all-human identity process.

Role exit is not, however, merely about leaving a social space, but concurrently about passing into a new, and perhaps unknown social space (Garfinkel 1984). It is not uncommon that role exiters have no or only vague ideas what they will do after role withdrawal. For those upholding high status roles – such as pro-tennis players – any succeeding role may be conceived of as a less desirable alternative. Yet, identifying and assessing role alternatives is only one, albeit significant, aspect of a larger process of doubting, decision making and disengaging from a previous role (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988).

A extraordinary quality of role exit is that the expectations, norms and identity attached to an ex-role are not related primarily to what an individual currently is doing, but rather to previous roles (ibid). Like any identity can be grasped in the light of alternative ones, ex-statuses receive meaning in contrast to previous statuses. Hence, ‘exes’ uphold identities anchored in role positions that they no longer occupy. To any person, role exit constitutes a crucial identity question and a biographical disjuncture where the connections between the past, present and future need to be re-established. In addition, it is about achieving and securing a desirable life-style, without being subject to people’s sanctions or contempt (this process resembles what Garfinkel, 1967, calls ‘passing’).

Against this background, the meaning of being an ‘ex’ remains ambiguous. On the one hand, ex-tennis players are highly admired and are important to personal and collective narratives and, on the other, many ‘exes’ face envy or contempt. In both instances, status associated with an ex-role brings about recognition and admiration, yet often without the ‘ex’ sensing an authentic appreciation of others. One explanation is that their status emanates primarily from a position in the social structure (role) and not from who they are (their identity). Also, status is not only derivable from present roles, but from previous ones. By the same token, access to social arenas stems less from who they are and more from who they were. For these reasons ‘exes’ must cope with people’s reactions both toward who they once were (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988) and what they are now.

3. Methodological Approach

In this study, a qualitative approach was adopted and data were obtained during two, one and a half-hour biographical interview-sessions with each interviewee, with at least a two-month interval between the first and second interview. Interviewees were identified by using opportunistic and judgement sampling (Burgess 1984). A colleague and friend to the interviewees provided access. Excluding redundant biographical information and authentic names ensured the interviewees’ confidentiality. Interview themes were singled out by reviewing research both in this field and in neighbouring fields, and by
conversing with friends and colleagues. Additional themes crystallised during the first interview, which were then covered in subsequent sessions, a procedure inspired by grounded theory approaches (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Generally speaking, the objective of this approach may be twofold: to obtain an elaborate understanding of a matter or assist a refinement of a theory. The first aim is the primary here; thus, to facilitate insights into the ex-players’ own experiences of upholding and withdrawing from the social role of a professional tennis player as well as how this have impacted on their identity.

The selected approach has several limitations. Characteristically, personal narratives are not consistent and stable over time and, more importantly, the organisation of empirical results does not necessarily reflect reality. Rather, people are inconsistent in depicting their past, among other things, since human memory is ‘deficient’. Also, to maintain a positive self-image people ‘polish’, consciously or unconsciously, their past. Additionally, human life does not progress along easily identifiable sequences, but such sequences are analytical categories constructed by the researcher. Thus, life trajectories and career withdrawal may seem sequential, when in fact they are construed sequentially. Nonetheless, and considering these limitations, life stories are sociologically interesting; they reveal the ways in which people construct and revise their stories of self. Finally, extended experiences of media exposure partly hindered access to interviewees’ spontaneous self-disclosures; instead they depicted an ‘official’ life story, where performances, results and injuries were foci. However, this was not due to an unwillingness to be frank and to share feelings and thoughts, but merely reflected years of heavy media influence. Intense and extensive probing supposedly compensated for this.

* Three aforementioned theoretical concepts were central in the analysis: identity, social role and role exit. Thus, inspired by, but not limited to, the social psychological discourse on social roles, Stier’s (1998/2003) analytical toolkit on human identity and Fuchs Ebaugh’s (1988) framework on role exit, data was analyzed sequentially (chronologically) and consequentially (thematically). By superimposing a hypothetical life-line (linked to events or personal experiences) a chronological analysis served to structure and make sense of the life-process of the interviewees (Ehn 1992; Stier 1998). The task was to ‘listen beyond’ personal accounts, in order to grasp the anatomy of personal career construction and experiences of role exit and identity (Bertaux-Wiame 1981). This involved translating, coding and extracting the ‘analytically valuable’ in their stories – a process called ‘intrusion’ (Plummer 1983; Stier 1998). Intrusion meant editing or interpreting data and changing authentic names of interviewees and locations, eliminating repetitions, stumbling and broken speech, excluding redundant information, and running together things said minutes apart to facilitate understanding. The subsequent thematic analysis involved the identification of
additional empirical themes, as well as analyzing data, seeking underlying patterns and incongruences in the interviewees’ stories.

4. A Sequential Analysis

At an early age tennis became an essential component in the interviewees’ life. Several of them did not to complete their secondary education, but concentrated already as teenagers fully on tennis. They all spend several years at the professional tennis circuit and were ranked among the one hundred best players in the world (for a discussion on the specifics of their active career, see Stier 2005). Some of them eventually became famous tennis stars whereas others, despite their success on courts around the world, remained relatively unknown to the public.

As long as the interviewees were able to live up to the expectations attached to the ‘pro-tennis role’ they did not give ‘post-tennis life’ much consideration. Exceptions were those players whose careers had not rendered them enough money to be economically independent for the rest of their lives, and, therefore, they were more concerned with life post-career life.

Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) singles out five phases in a role exit sequence. The first, *first doubts*, began as the players more frequently and systematically began to reflect over and scrutinise ‘pro-life’. Albeit doubting often emanates in dissatisfaction with a present situation, the players were content with it. Pro-life rendered financial gains, friends, fame, social status and a sense of identity, and hence most career alternatives seemed unattractive. At the same time, public exposure, in conjunction with social and inner pressure (also during periods of ‘active’ rest and vacation) sparked first doubts. Injuries, an eroding motivation, poor court performances, with repercussions for their ATP-ranking, lack of focus and a new domestic situation (e.g. marriage or parenthood) added to doubts. Typically, first doubts were depicted in words of ‘saturation’ and ‘career stagnation’:

When we had our first child I felt. should I really be gone for five weeks now? Should I be there to see his first steps. Do I enjoy my tennis as much anymore? I started to ask myself those kinds of questions… I felt: ‘this is going in the wrong direction’. Can I get my motivation back? Eventually I reached I point when I thought: ‘this is it – I’ll quit’.

Another player says:

My ranking was getting worse… I lost games in the first rounds which meant that I had to start playing qualification games again. Then my body started to hurt more and more. Of course, after twenty five years of playing it wasn’t that strange!… This made me start thinking about retiring.
Responses to first doubts were ambivalence, resistance and a sense of threatened ontological security and identity. Cognitively, interviewees were aware of the inevitable time-limit of their career, but also of the option of trying ‘just one year more’ – i.e. to postpone retirement:

I started questioning my capacity, or rather I knew I wasn’t coming back to full strength. Still I postponed the inevitable…Why? Because I didn’t know what I would be doing instead…When I had injuries I said to myself that I would give it another try. I lived life month by month, and then week by week and finally day by day. You can even say that in my head I quit earlier than I did.

So typically rehabilitation periods were superseded by repeated ‘comebacks’, and comebacks were followed by new injury absences and so on.

Despite an extensive organisation around the players – physiotherapists, medical doctors, coaches and others, there was no organised support structure for career withdrawal. Instead significant others were used for ‘reality testing’ (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988). If friends and family favoured retirement, this convinced the players that this was the proper thing to do. Or by stressing benefits of career continuation and the losses of role exit, family and friends encouraged the players to postpone retirement. Questions from journalists and others also fuelled first doubts. In the media some of them were also depicted as ‘exes’ even before a decision to retire had been taken. But on the whole, the decision to quit or not was perceived as a personal one.

Inability to perform on court, injuries or a fear of playing pro-tennis ‘at any cost’ and, by doing so, taint prior success with poor results on the downhill slope, brought about an insight of the impossibility of role-maintenance, and made them more inclined to search for and assess potential role-alternatives. Merely in hindsight such an ‘insight’ was a conscious, deliberate and rational experience, whereas spontaneous, unplanned and emotional factors most likely were at play.

During the second phase, by Fuchs Ebaugh called seeking and weighing alternatives, the interviewees began to explore career alternatives in a more systematic fashion. Generally speaking, role exiters tend to have merely vague ideas about post-career life – something which also applies to the tennis players. Alternative careers seemed unrealistic, unattractive or vague at first:

Occasionally I thought about what would happen after my career. It thought I’d go back to studying… But I there was nothing that I felt like ‘that’s what I want to do afterwards!’

Some interviewees, especially those who were not economically independent for the rest of their lives, often worried about life after the career.

A common denominator for the interviewees is their realization that retirement involved a relocation from a life at the centre of attention to a life as an ‘ex’. At the same time, most interviewees were confident that their capacity,
discipline and commitment would serve them well in establishing a decent post-career life. Alone or together with others, some interviewees systematically clarified and assessed pros and cons of viable role alternatives, whereas for others, role alternatives crystallised by chance. For all of them, side bets played a significant role in this process, simply because role exit inevitably meant a loss of side bets. Retiring also brought advantages: more family time, less travelling and less training time.

The interviewees typically construe their self-narrative, with references to their results on court or experiences of injuries. Thus, injuries, loss of ranking positions, having to play qualification games, a series of subsequent match-losses, marriage or becoming a father gradually lead up to a definite decision to withdraw, a moment they vividly recall and describe in words of relief, content, sadness and loss. The decision constituted a meaningful turning point. Drawing from Lofland and Stark (1965) and Lofland (1996), Fuchs Ebaugh (1988:123) describes a turning point as:

… there comes a point in the role-exiting process at which the individual makes a firm and definitive decision to exit. This decision usually occurs in connection with some turning point in the individual’s life. A turning point is an event that mobilizes and focuses awareness that old lines of action are complete, have failed, have been disrupted, or are no longer personally satisfying and provides individuals with the opportunity to do something different with their lives.

This turning point became an essential component of the players’ ‘ongoing story of self’ (Giddens 1991; Stier 1998) – merely since they retrospectively construe it as such. It should be noted that for several of them the decision did not coincide with the last game they played. Rather, some decided in advance, whereas others did not know what was to be their last game.

The change from being an active, successful player to being a former active, successful player was succeeded by a relative status loss. Decreased social interaction, being attributed derogatory meanings and new social expectations by others, coping with role residue, and being defined as an ex-member of a group characterise the interviewees’ identity work. Additionally, they had to search for a desirable and durable ‘substitutory’ identity. This involved, among other things, identifying and dealing with new expectations and embracing a new life-style.

This transition was, at least partially, obscured since others continuously maintained expectations of them based on their ex-role. Such residue of former roles, Fuchs Ebaugh’s (1988) refers to as hangover identity. The hangover identity was incorporated in their self-concept and role-kit. For these reasons it seems as if establishing an ex-role identity has been relatively troublesome for several interviewees:

The time just after I quit was tough… What was I supposed to do now? And there were no headlines in the newspaper about me anymore… And to make things worse, I didn’t
have much of an income either, and I knew that the money I made on the tour would last us more than ten years or so.

This change has been difficult. I was among the best players in the world and suddenly it’s like being an amateur again. It’s tough to realise that you are now a novice at what you are doing.

Other seemed content with both their ex-identity and the ‘new’ one:

I don’t really miss it… Of course, when I watch Australian Open on TV, with the Swedish fans and all I can miss it a bit – but I wouldn’t like to go back into that lifestyle. I’m done with it.

Moreover, the interviewees had to cope with new and unfamiliar situations and were forced to interact with people who had not been part of their former group. By the same token, they have had to manage people’s ignorance, stereotypes, prejudice or sheer curiosity.

Taken together, the interviewees have had to compensate for an ‘identity-gap’ by substituting one role for another, or by maintaining close relationships with other ex-players or by redefining their role within the world of tennis and pick up a career as a coach or a manager. Even those who today have careers outside the immediate world of sports frequently play tennis, golf, soccer or floor hockey with people in a similar situation. This, and jobs as tennis coaches, tennis managers, consultants and sport commentators, have enabled them to maintain linkages with the world of tennis and people with whom they share a history and similar experiences. Similarly, interviewees with other professions are involved in amateur sports with other ex-athletes. Overall it seems as if the their prior group has remained the most influential social network and object of identification. With this said, they have continued to self-construe as tennis players and are, therefore, not particularly estranged from their reference group.

5. A Consequential Analysis

A significant aspect of role behaviour is **role attachment**, which refers to the intensity of personal involvement in a given role. Role attachment is commonly presumed to be a high when a role is significant for some one’s identity and self-concept. By contrast, **role commitment** refers to the probability that an individual will remain within the role.

Furthermore, people tend to ‘overidentify’ a person with one of his roles (Goffman 1961/1963) and, accordingly, ascribe him or her an identity based on that single, specific role – a tendency Turner (1978) calls **role-person merger**. Person and role are merged when there is a systematic pattern of failure of role compartmentalization, resistance to abandon a role (despite advantageous role-alternatives) and the continuous acquisition of role-compatible alternatives. The more extensive a role is, the more likely role-person merger is to occur. And, the
better and more consistent a person’s role portrayal comes across to others, the more likely they are to (over)identify him or her with the role (Stephan & Stephan 1985). Drawing from symbolic interactionism, role-person merger also manifests itself in the individual’s self-concept.

Role-person merger did, however, prove insufficient to describe the extent of the player’s role ‘loyalty’. Instead, role engulfment more adequately denotes this process – this for three reasons. First, success and fame generated by their professional careers have had a tremendous impact on their self-concept and social identity. More than anything else they, therefore, construe themselves as tennis players - even to a degree that they cannot depict themselves without talking about tennis. Second, with the exception of their families and friends people primarily view them as tennis players – i.e. their public self is viewed as (or mistaken for) their ‘total’ self. Third, the interviewees’ identity has been construed within the realms of media logics, making them possessions of sport ‘consumers’ where opinions, not only about the player’s performances but about them as persons, were expressed. At the same time, it was within this context that their status and fame originated. Finally, still years after withdrawal several of them seem so engulfed in their prior roles.

Yet another aspect of role behaviour is what Becker (1960) referred to as side bets – e.g. friendship, status, money or fame. Facing the loss of such side bets may postpone role exit. With this said, disengagement has often been associated with role loss and an eroding sense of personal identity. However, Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) promotes a wider usage of the term disengagement; it denotes what people experience at all stages in life. It does not refer to an isolated individual process, but to a social one. As somebody starts to distance him- or herself from the prior role, other people typically close to the exiter, responds by distancing themselves from the exiter.

Specifically, disengagement refers

… to the process of disassociating and disidentifying with the values, ideas, expectations, and social relationships of a particular social role which a person performed for a given period in his or her life (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988: 10).

In addition, disengagement involves, more than anything else, giving up rights and benefits associated with the former role and, concurrently, that new expectations are placed onto the individual. This is typically followed by a modification of a person’s role kit and social networks. (For some people disengagement means a ‘reappropriation’ of privacy and personal identity.) The extent of disengagement can vary – from total withdrawal to active involvement with former role partners. There are also people who are unable to withdraw psychologically from social expectations of a previous role or find that others maintain previous role expectations on them.

For the interviewees, the role of tennis player was a manifest (or even supermanifest) role, which took precedence over all other roles. But, even if
they wanted to stay within the role several external factors may have worked in a different direction. For the players, disengagement expressed itself as a simultaneous physical, cognitive, emotional and communicative withdrawal. It was physical since they spent less time in the prior milieus, cognitive since they frequently began to think of themselves as an ‘ex’, emotional since they felt less as a pro-tennis player and, finally, communicative since they more frequently began to self-refer as an ‘ex’.

In effect retirement involved multiple role exits; the interviewees quit playing tennis, exited the social space of pro-tennis and gave up side bets. Concurrently, they ‘passed’ into a new, unknown social space (Garfinkel 1984). Whereas being a famous tennis player is not merely about being an insider, but being in the hall of fame of insiders, becoming an ‘ex’ meant a relocation to the social periphery and a status loss (Becker 1963). Additionally, to a higher extent than before they had to cope with unfamiliar situations and people’s attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice or sheer curiosity. They also had to cope with new social expectations, a loss of social status, change lifestyle and adopt new roles.

With reference to Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) the players saw withdrawal as voluntary and within the realms of personal control. But at another level, their career choices were constrained by results on the court, physical well-being, injuries and social expectations. Also, disengagement has merely been partial, since their personal identity and roles are so closely meshed. People upheld prior role-expectations of them, which emanated in an ‘obsolete’ position in the social structure and not a current one. Exiting a new role requires adaptation, both on the part of the individual and others around him or her. ‘Exes’ have relationships both with members of their former group – i.e. with people with whom they once shared a specific status and identity – and with fellow ‘exes’ who previously were part of the same group.

For these reasons, the interviewees have had to deal with people’s reactions both toward who they once were and who they are. Interaction with other ex-players is not merely based on current role definitions or self-concept but on past roles or identities that remain salient and affect how they and others view them. They also need to cope with those who have not been members of the same group – their curiosity, ignorance, hostility and stereotypes. In this context Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) refers to marginal cultures insofar that ‘exes’ may develop a marginal culture to cope with labels and stereotypes of the surrounding society (Stonequist 1937). Whether the culture of ex-tennis players fairly can be labelled marginal depends on how marginality is defined. Statistically they are marginal; in status terms they cannot be construed as such.

Disidentification is a consequence of disengagement and a process of ceasing to view oneself in the light of a former role (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988). For the players role withdrawal meant detaching from the former role, committing to an alternative one, and reshaping their identity and self-image – in contrast to
active players. This role-residue reinforced their partial identification with active or retired tennis players.

In other words: role exit initiated a process of unlearning and relearning aspects of their self-knowledge, where identifications and past experiences of being famous still came to remain vital parts of their biography. At the time, these identifications and experiences, in addition to elements of the new roles, had to be incorporated into a relatively coherent sense of self; that is, into their self-concept (Stier 1998). Role-residuals must be matched with new role elements in order to achieve a sense of congruence in the individual’s identity. This struggle of integrating old and new identity elements is characteristic of the role exit process. For these reasons establishing an ex-role identity has been troublesome for some of the interviewees.

6. Final remarks

Drawing from the interviews, it is beyond doubt that successful performances on the court provided the interviewees with a positive self-image, a high level of self-esteem and an extremely competition and achievement-oriented identity, characterised by role-engulfment and identity appropriation. As time went by, long-term injuries and physical strain, social pressure and an eroding motivation, they gradually began to question their present situation. First doubts were followed by systematic explorations of career alternatives and, eventually, by a decision to withdraw.

Considering that any social role or identity is attached to a given social position, retirement inevitably meant a relocation in social space as well as a status loss for the players. Similarly, being a transgression of social thresholds, role exit involved processes of disengagement and disidentification, and a temporary rupture of their self-narrative. Since then, however, they have adopted a new life-style, with other social expectations and different status conditions, and also partially redefined themselves. Yet it seems fair to conclude that they maintain what can be referred to as a ‘shadow identity’, containing residual from the former role. Concretely, this is seen in how they still primarily self-refer as tennis players (it is even difficult for them to depict themselves without talking about tennis). In addition to this, they have sustained a strong social anchorage with the world of tennis. With this said, exiting a professional tennis career was a psychological and social challenge to them – albeit they seemingly have been successful in coping with it.

Despite claims that sport is a potent source of identity and community for athletes, spectators or nations – the identity process of athletes in general, and professional tennis players in particular, has traditionally been an unexplored field for sociological social psychology. With this said, this presentation has hopefully shown how the experiences of a small group of former professional
tennis players may shed light upon the overall phenomenon of sports and its value for personal identity formation.

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ÅSKÅDAREFFEKT OCH AKTÖRSFÖRKLARINGAR I EN KLASSRUMSSITUATION

Robert Thornberg


Forskning om åskådareffekt

Det finns forskning som visar att människors benägenhet att hjälpa någon som befinner sig i nöd, t.ex. ligger skadad efter ett fall, dramatiskt påverkas av närvaron av andra. Den s.k. åskådareffekten (bystander effect) innebär att “the


t.ex. sjuksköterska (Cramer, McMaster, Bartell & Dragna, 1988), öka sannolikheten för ett ingripande. Caplan och Hay (1989) har studerat åskådareffekter bland förskolebarn. I deras studie var frekvensen av hjälpsamt eller prosocialt beteende låg bland de unga åskådarna när de blev vittne till ett annat barn i nöd. Dessutom gjorde lärare ringa för att uppmuntra barnen att hjälpa eller ingripa i de aktuella situationerna. Enligt intervjuerna menar barnen att läraren är den som brukar hjälpa. Ingen av barnen trodde att de själva borde hjälpa. Caplan och Hay (1989) menar att dessa barn tycks ha anpassat sig till mer vuxenlika normer (att det är särskilda individer som har ansvar för att hjälpa personer i nöd). Mot bakgrund av detta drar forskarna slutsatsen att “there is evidence to suggest that diffusion of responsibility may, in part, contribute to the lack of responding to companions’ distress, in that the children knew how to respond to a distressed peer, but did not believe that they are supposed to do anything when more competent adult bystanders are present” (s. 240). Hjälpsamma elevbeteenden kan dessutom hindras eller motverkas under lektionerna av lärarens kommentarer och klassrumsregler (Thornberg, 2006). Observationsstudier kring mobbning visar vidare att elever sällan ingriper när de blir vittnen till mobbning (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Craig, Pepler & Atlas, 2000).

Traditionellt sett har forskning om åskådareffekt genomförts i laboratorie-miljöer eller i artificiella arrangemang och utifrån en experimentell eller kvasi-experimentell design. Dessutom har forskning om åskådareffekt traditionellt sett inte inbegripit barn som åskådare (för undantag dock, se Caplan & Hay, 1989; Staub, 1970). I motsats till den design som de själva har använt och som bl.a. går ut på att nytta videoinspelningar av två standardiserade situationer som en utgångspunkt för barnintervjuer, argumenterar Caplan och Hay (1989) att “interviews with children immediately following naturally occurring distress episodes in the classroom might have elicited even more valid answers” (s. 241). Studier med ett ”critical-incident”-förfarande där observationer av skolbarn som åskådare i verkliga nödsituationer följs av intervjuer kring händelserna och deltagarnas åskådarbeteenden har ännu inte genomförts. Mot bakgrund av detta kan denna studie utveckla och vidga forskningen om åskådareffekt eftersom den använder just en sådan design.

Syftet med denna studie är att undersöka hur några skolbarn tolkar en specifik klassrums situation samt sitt agerande som åskådare i denna situation där en klasskamrat ligger på golvet och gråter tyst och där det är andra barn som också bevittnar nödsituationen. Studien som presenteras här utgör ett mindre sidoprojekt av ett fältförskningsprojekt om värden och normer i skolans vardagsliv.

**Metod**

Fallstudiedesignen i denna undersökning inrymmer både en ”critical incident”-observation, registrerad genom fältanteckning och ljudupptagning, och uppföljande samtal med 11 elever (6 pojkar och 5 flickor). Samtalen


Fallbeskrivning: Om en pojke i nöd

Under det etnografiska fältarbetet har ett antal nødsituationer där elever agerar som icke-hjälpsamma åskådare då och då observerats. Exempel på detta är barn som fortsätter att leka eller spela och springa förbi en klasskamrat som har ramlat och slagit sig, barn som är i närheten och ser på när andra barn kränker utvecklingsstörda eller yngre barn, barn som passivt bevattnar bråk mellan andra barn eller när någon blir retad. Forskningsintresset i detta paper är att undersöka varför de flesta elever inte intervenerade eller hjälpte och hur både intervenerande och icke-intervenerande elever resonerar över sitt agerande i följande specifika fall.

Rasten är slut, och eleverna i år 5 är på väg in till klassrummet. När jag kommer in i klassrummet från kapprummet får jag syn på Daniel som ligger på golvet. Han håller sig för armen, är röd i ansiktet och gråter tyst. En del elever sitter redan vid sina bänkar. Läraren pratar med några elever en bit därifrån. Eleverna som kommer in går förbi
Daniel och sätter sig på sina platser. Den enda elev som jag ser gå fram till Daniel när eleverna går in i klassrummet är Viktor. Han frågar:

"Vad är det som hänt, Daniel?"
"Jag fick Johans knä på armen", säger Daniel.

Viktor går sedan och sätter sig på sin plats.
"Nu sätter vi oss på våra platser, så att vi kan börja”, säger läraren.
Daniel ligger kvar. Han håller fortfarande för sin arm och gräter tyst.

Några elever tittar mot Daniel.
David som sitter i närheten lämnar sin plats och går fram till Daniel.
"Hur gick det?”, frågar han Daniel.
Daniel svarar inte.

David står kvar hos Daniel.
"Och du sätter dig på din plats också, Daniel!", säger läraren med höjd röst.
"Han har skadat sig”, säger David till läraren.
Läraren kommer fram till Daniel och böjer sig ned över honom.
"Mm, jag fick Johans knä på armen”, säger han.

I excerptet ovan befinner sig en elev i en nödsituation medan andra elever passar förbi honom, ja, en del bokstavligen kliver över honom, på väg till sina platser. En elev går fram och frågar vad som har hänt och lämnar honom sedan. Efter en stund kommer en annan elev fram till honom, frågar samma typ av fråga och förblir hos honom. Daniel har varken en låg eller hög status i klassen och har heller ingen bakgrund av att vara eller ha varit utsatt för mobbning. Han är en ordinär elev med en mellanstatus i klassen.

**De icke-hjälpande elevernas definition av situationen**

De individuella samtalen med eleverna indikerar en variation av definitioner av den specifika nödsituationen och som på olika sätt relateras till ett icke-hjälpande eller icke-ingripande beteende. Under analysprocessen har sju passiva åskådardefinitioner konstruerats, grundade i datamaterialet: Trivialisering, disassociation, pinsamhetsassociation, arbetsprioritering, normappellering, publikmodellering och ansvarsöverföring.

**Trivialisering**

Hampus: Han grät visst men jag märkte inte det. Jag trodde inte att det var nåt allvarligt.
Jag: Hur kom det sig?
Hampus: Han brukar ju ligga ner och brottas med andra.

**Dissociation**

Detta begrepp refererar till en definition av händelsen som en nödsituation samtidigt som man dissocierar sig själv från offret eller offrets nöd, vilket tycks kunna ske på två sätt. Den första varianten är händelsedissociation och innebär att man tänker sig att man inte har varit inblandad i det sociala händelseförlopp som har föregått eller lett fram till nödsituationen.

Jag: Vad tänkte du när du såg honom ligga där?
Sonny: Att han slagit sig eller nåt. Han grät lite såg det ut som.
Jag: Hur kom det sig att du bara satte dig på din plats.
Sonny: Ja, men jag hade ju inte gjort nåt.
Jag: Hur menar du?
Sonny: Jag visste ju inte vad som hade hänt.

Den andra formen av dissociation är *relationsdissociation* och innebär att eleven definerar sig själv som icke-vän till offret. “A men, jag är ju inte kompis med han” (Sandra).

**Pinsamhetsassociation**

Detta begrepp refererar till en definition av händelsen som en nödsituation samtidigt som eleven associerar situationen med pinsamhetskänslor. Ett sätt att göra detta på är att tolka situationen som pinsam för offret eftersom andra tittar på honom. Eleven vill mot bakgrund av detta inte sälla sig till den pinsamhetskapande publiken och få offret att känna sig ännu mer pinsam (offerorienterad pinsamhetsassociation). Som en följd av detta undviker eller lämnar eleven situationen.

Jag: Vad tänkte du när du såg honom ligga på golvet?
Bea: Jag tänkte, jag undra vad det var som hade hänt, att eeh, å sen gick jag inte fram till honom men jag gick till min plats.
Jag: Hur kommer det sig att du inte gick fram till honom utan gick till din plats?
Bea: Det var så många personer framför eller ja, där omkring.
Jag: Det var så många personer?
Bea: Ja, och som titta å så. Å det kanske var pinsamt för honom om alla stod där.
Jag: Mm. Hur tänker du då?
Bea: A men, när, om eh man gräter eller nåt å, om man, om många personer står runt då brukar det bli ganska pinsamt, tycker jag. Å då kanske inte alla behöver stå där.
Pinsamhetsassociation kan också handla om ett slags ”scenskräck” och en rädsla för att publiken ska komma att reta eller värdera eleven negativt om denna skulle ingripa för att hjälpa offret (självorienterad pinsamhetsassociation).

Jag: Vad ville du göra när du såg honom?
Jag: Hur menar du?
Bea: Ja, att nån kanske skulle börja reta en, å tro att man är kår i honom eller nåt.

**Publikmodellering**

Detta begrepp refererar till en definition av händelsen där den sociala normen eller modellen för beteendet hämtas från de andra vittnena i situationen.

Jag: Hur kommer det sig liksom att du inte brydde dig så då?
Alice: Det var ingen annan som gjorde så då tänkte jag inte på det.

**Arbetsprioritering**

Detta begrepp refererar till en definition av händelsen som en nödsituation samtidigt som eleven prioriterar sitt egna arbetsprojekt framför att hjälpa offret. “Nä, för att jag ville börja jobba med min berättelse” (Frida).

**Normappellering**

Detta begrepp refererar till en definition av händelsen som en nödsituation samtidigt som eleven ger en annan norm som är i konflikt med ett hjälpsamt beteende en större betydelse. De aktuella konkurrenderande normer i detta fall är klassrumsregler som föreskriver att när man kommer in i klassrummet så ska man vara tyst och direkt gå och sätta sig på sin plats.

Alice: Ja, å så ska vi ju sätta oss på våra platser när vi kommer in från rasten.
Jag: Ni ska sätta er på era platser?
Alice: Ja, det har Marianne [läraren] sagt att vi ska.

**Ansvarsöverföring**

Detta begrepp refererar till en definition av händelsen som en nödsituation samtidigt som eleven inte definierar ett personligt ansvar för att hjälpa offret. I stället överförs ansvaret på andra personer. I några av de definitioner som elever uttrycker överförs ansvaret på läraren.

Erik: Jag tänkte att det var på riktigt. Att han hade slagit sig.
Jag: Hur kommer det sig att du tänkte så och så gjorde du ingenting?
Erik: Jag såg han ligga där och tänkte att Marianne [läraren] kommer att gå till honom.
Sandra: För att vi brukar göra så. Vi sätter oss på sina platser så är det Marianne som går fram och frågar vad som hänt.  
Jag: Så brukar det vara?  
Sandra: Ja. Eller så går väl nån kompis fram och säger så här: ”vad har hänt?”  
Jag: Okej. Hur kommer det sig att inte du gick fram å pratade eller gjorde nånting då?  
Sandra: A men, jag är ju inte kompis med han.

I det senare excerptet överför Sandra även ansvaret till offrets vänner – offrets vänner bör hjälpa offret, inte hon eftersom hon definierar sig som en icke-vän. En tredje variant av ansvarsöverföring är att överföra ansvaret på förövaren, dvs. den person som skadat eller gjort offret ledsen.

Sonny: Ja, så hörde jag att Johan hade slagit till honom. Så då tycker jag att han borde trösta honom.  
Jag: Att Johan skulle trösta honom?  
Sonny: Ja, å säga förlåt.

Alla dessa begrepp (trivialisering, dissociation, pinsamhetsassociation, arbetsprioritering, normappellering, publikmodellering och ansvarsöverföring) tycks vara variationer av passiv åskådarrationalisering som, åtminstone delvis, skulle kunna förklara varför elever inte ingriper och hjälper offret i nödsituationen.

Hur de två icke-passiva åskådarna definierar situationen


Viktor: Fråga om det gick bra.  
Jag: Hur kom det sig att du frågade honom det?  
Viktor: För att han såg ledsen ut. Å för att jag undrade.

Några av de passiva åskådarna appellerar emellertid också till empatisk nyfikenhet men ett sådant motiv för att gå fram till Daniel verkar trängas undan av andra motiv eller rationaliseringar (se ovan). I Viktors och Davids fall tycks den empatiska nyfikenheten få dem att fråga Daniel om vad som har hänt. Denna intervention skulle kunna kallas att omsorgsfråga och tycks, åtminstone delvis och vid sidan av empatisk nyfikenhet, kunna härledas från elevens
internaliserade norm om att visa andra omsorg och som David menar att också de andra borde efterleva:

David: Jag tycker att dom ska gå och fråga vad som har hänt.
Jag: Hur kommer det sig att du tycker att det är viktigt att man går och frågar om vad som har hänt?
David: Annars kanske den tänker så här: ingen bryr sig ju om mig.


Jag: Vad sa eller gjorde han när du frågade det?
Viktor: Han sa inget. Han bara låg kvar.
Jag: Vad gjorde du då, när han bara låg kvar och ingenting sa?
Viktor: Inget.
Jag: Hur kommer det sig?
Viktor: Jag vet inte. Han liksom bara låg ju där. Så jag gick å satte mig.
Jag: Ja?
Viktor: Jag tänkte att Marianne skulle komma och trösta han. Å sen så gjorde hon det.
Jag: Hur kom det sig att du inte tröstade Daniel?
Viktor: Jag är inte så bra på det.


**Samspelet mellan olika definitioner**

Analysen av data indikerar att vissa begrepp eller definitioner av situationen tycks hänga ihop. Medan trivialisering inte tycks resultera i någon ansvarsöverföring (eftersom det enligt trivialisering inte finns något att ta ansvar för), förefaller dissociation leda till att man överför ansvar på andra. När en elev dissocierar så verkar han eller hon tänka att han eller hon inte har något personligt an-
svar för att hjälpa offret. I ett av fallen resulterar händelsesdissociation i ett blott ”brydde mig inte”. I andra fall tycks händelsesdissociation resultera i ansvarsöverföring till läraren eller förövaren. Relationsdissociation verkar resultera i ansvarsöverföring till offrets vänner men även till läraren.

En av de icke-passiva åskådarna förvandlar sig själv till att bli en passiv åskådare genom att överföra ansvaret på läraren och definiera sig själv som en inkompetent hjälpare, vilket antyder att dessa två definitioner hänger ihop. Vidare tycks normappellering (till klassrumsregler som är i konflikt med ett hjälpsamt beteende i situationen) få elever att agera som passiva eller icke-intervenerande åskådare samt överföra ansvaret på läraren. När en elev associerar situationen med känslor av pinsamhet så tycks eleven undvika att bli en del av scenen (i syfte att inte göra det pinsamt för sig själv eller för offret). Till skillnad från begreppen trivialisering, dissociation, pinsamhetsassociation, arbetsprioritering, normappellering (till normer i konflikt med att hjälpa), publikmodellering och ansvarsöverföring, så förefaller begreppen empatisk nyfikenhet, omsorgsnorm och att definiera sig som vän motverka passivt åskådarbeteende. Enligt hur pojken David resonerar och känner och beter sig, tycks detta faktorera passiva åskådare finns en avsaknad av att definiera sig som vän med den nödställda, vilket förefaller motverka empati och omsorg.

Discussion

Eftersom både intervjuaren och intervjupersonen samkonstruerar innehållet i en intervju så kan forskaren inte göra anspråk på att oproblematiskt representera intervjupersonens perspektiv. Vad en person säger och vad en person tänker är naturligtvis inte samma sak. Samtidigt är jag kritisk till en extrem inställning som påstår att vad forskaren endast kan och bör göra är att ”focus on the conversational skills of the participants rather than on the content of what they are saying and its relation to the world outside the interview” (Silverman, 2001, s. 97). Till skillnad från att fullständigt misstro vad intervjupersonen rapporterar under intervjun så menar jag att forskaren kan ha ett kritiskt förhållningssätt som innebär att (a) vara medveten om intervjuens samkonstruerande natur och tolka intervju data med försiktighet och samtidigt (b) ta intervjupersonen och hans eller hennes berättelser på allvar. Eftersom jag dessutom har vistats i ett antal månader innan den kritiska händelsen i barnens skolvardag utifrån rollen som ”minsta möjliga vuxen” så är det också rimligt att anta att barnen i studien inte behöver försvara sig på samma sätt som inför en lärare eller en typisk vuxen. Jag har, i enlighet med rollen, försökt att uppträda icke-dömande och icke-värderande gentemot barnen och deras utsagor i de uppföljande intervjuerna såväl som i mitt övriga vardagliga samspel med dem. Naturligtvis föreligger ändå en risk för
sociala önskvärdhetseffekter i intervjuerna även om jag har försökt att minimera dessa genom min forskarroll som ”minsta möjliga vuxen”.


Ett annat kluser av hämmande faktorer är sociala normer eller värderingar som är i konflikt med att hjälpa offret (Gaertner, 1975; Milgram, 1974; Thorn-


Referenser

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POOR DECISION MAKING RELATED TO PERSONALITY, STRESS REACTIONS, GROUP DYNAMICS, AND SITUATION AWARENESS IN MILITARY STAFFS

Claes Wallenius

Introduction

Military leadership at higher organizational levels has several specific characteristics, implying that knowledge and skills from lower-level leadership may not necessarily be applicable. While lower-level leadership often involves an individual commander giving orders face to face, higher-level leadership is often characterized by a more complex social interplay, where the staff has an important function, and by a more complex and long-term decision-making process. The present study focuses on the latter level and on the question: what affects the decision-making quality in military staffs?

There are several ways of understanding why staffs do not always make optimal decisions. One classical way of approaching the quality of military leadership is to relate it to more general individual traits, like personality. However, even if the correlation between general traits and performance may often be statistically significant, it still leaves a lot of the variation unexplained. The present approach is based on the impact of the interaction between individual trait-factors, and factors related to the decision-making process and its context. There are several possible difficulties with decision-making in a modern military staff that may relate to factors of the latter kind.

One problem with military decision-making relates to stress exposure, for instance, time pressure and that consequences of a mistake may literally be a question of life and death. A large body of research has documented that moderate levels of stress exposure increase performance, while higher will decrease it. This pattern is also valid for groups (Kerr & Tindale, 2004), and for military officers, even if they are expected to have a good stress coping potential (Wallenius, 2001; Wallenius, Johansson, & Larsson, 2002; Wallenius, Larsson, & Johansson, 2004). There is, accordingly, reason to believe that one cause of decision-making faults is stress reactions, when the optimal level of stress exposure is exceeded.

A second problem is that a staff may be affected by maladaptive group dynamics, like groupthink (Janis, 1972). This well-known concept is developed from case studies on military decision-making. Janis’ conclusion is that a decision group exposed to stress may fall victim to false cohesiveness. Single members will adapt to group norms and to high status members, instead of critically examining the decision alternatives. The staff may choose an alternative too fast, without flexibility for reexamination. Several of the assumed antecedents to groupthink may recurrently be present in a military staff, like
stress, homogeneity of members and a hierarchical submissiveness to high-status group members.

One possible theoretical explanation to maladaptive group dynamics is given by evolutionary social psychology, which postulates a basic fear of exclusion from groups (Buss, 1999; Marks & Nesse, 1994). Exclusion implied less survival chances and less fitness in prehistoric hunter/gatherer groups. Accordingly, our present genes come from those in the past who feared exclusion, even if they had to pay with adaptation to group norms and submissiveness to dominating members.

The groupthink theory has been subject to criticism and empirical studies have given mixed results (Kerr & Tindale, 2004). The impact of cohesiveness is, for example, not clear. Cohesiveness seems to sometimes increase and sometimes reduce the tendency for groupthink (see e.g. Rosander, 2003). There is also an assumption in the theory that there is a negative relation between cohesiveness and performance. Empirical studies have, in contrast, shown a significant but small positive effect (for a review, see Mullen & Copper, 1994). Several researches have, however, agreed that imperfect decision-making may be a result of false consensus, insensitive high status members, or lack of critical examination of the alternatives (see e.g., Orasanu & Salas, 1993).

A third potential reason for decision-making faults is lack of situation awareness, a problem frequently discussed in recent military psychological research (Eid, Johnsen, Brun, Laberg, Nyhus, & Larsson, 2004). Especially as we move towards a network organization, with less physical connections within a staff, the problem of different or unclear appraisals of situations is actualized.

We can conclude that the performance of a staff may be inadequate, despite a competent choice of strategy and tactics and competent training. The reasons for this may be individual stress reactions, that striving for consensus and adaptation to group norms may overrun the critical examination of decision alternatives, or that appropriate situation awareness is lacking.

A problem in research on group effectiveness is how to measure group characteristics. Several possibilities may be at hand that imply aggregation of individual self-report data to the group level. Common methods include the use of measures such as mean, maximum, or minimum values on different variables, as well as measures of group diversity, like standard deviation or range (see e.g., Gustavsson & Bäccman, 2005; Halfhill, Nielsen, Sundstrom & Weilbaecher, 2005). Aggregation of individual data to the group level is, however, complex and task dependent, implying that we lack an established method.

Aim of this study

The purpose of the present survey was to study how the frequency of performance failures in a high-level military staff is affected by personality factors, individual stress reactions, situation awareness, and maladaptive group
dynamics. Because instruments are lacking, there was also a purpose to develop a valid and reliable questionnaire.

Method

The Staff Exercises

A questionnaire was administered to participants in two Swedish exercises in staff work. The exercises primarily had the purpose of training staff methods and routines, with emphasis on the operational and tactical levels.

The first exercise, Tactical Staff Duty Exercise, took place at 1st Signals Regiment in Enköping, Sweden, in February 2005. The scenario included a Scandinavian conflict where Swedish territory was threatened. The exercise focused on army-related issues and the exercised level was the Army Tactical Command.

The second exercise, Maritime /Air Force Staff Exercise, took place at the Swedish National Defence College in Stockholm in April 2005. Focus was on air force- and navy-related issues. The scenario included a NATO led Peace Support Operation, where peace support and peace enforcement operations were planned and executed. The staff was organized according to the Combined Joint Task Force concept with the following components: Head Quarters, Maritime Component Command (MCC), Air Component Command (ACC), and Combined Air Operation Centre (CAOC). The Land Component Command (LCC), which corresponds to the Army Tactical Command at the Tactical Staff Duty Exercise above, was simulated.

The staffs and their different sections were, in both exercises, physically dispersed in different rooms. Communication was mainly by mail and telephone, while face-to-face contact between the staff sections was minimized. This was in order to simulate a “real” crisis situation, where the staff sections are more dispersed in the terrain. Both exercises lasted just under one week.

Participants

Most participants were students from the two major programs at the Swedish National Defence College, complemented with external participants from other organizations related to the armed forces. The subjects were anonymous and we have no exact data on gender, age, or rank. The frequency of females is approximately the same as among higher military officers in general, that is below 10%. The students in the Staff Program are normally captains around 35 years of age and the students in the Advanced Command Program are normally majors around 40 years of age. Consequently, the military ranks were mainly captains and majors, but also lieutenant colonels and colonels participated on higher positions.

On the Tactical Staff Duty Exercise, the total number of participants in the exercised staffs was 219. Returned questionnaires were obtained from 156
officers, implying a total response rate of 71%. On the Maritime /Air Force Staff Exercise the total number of participants in the exercised staffs were 204. Returned questionnaires were obtained from 100 officers, implying a total response rate of 49%. The total number participants in the study are accordingly 256. Their position in the staffs were chiefs \((n = 42)\), deputies \((n = 17)\), members \((n = 175)\), and assistants \((n = 20)\).

**Measures**

A questionnaire, consisting of four parts, was used, where each item was answered on a 6-point response scale from Never Occurs (= 1) to Occurs All the Time (= 6). All items were tested and modified on pilot trails made during 2004 on similar exercises.

*Part 1: Stress exposure*

Four self-made items intended to measure stress exposure during the exercise was factor analyzed (principal axis factoring). One factor was found. Testing the internal consistency of the scale implied that one item was dropped. The result was the variable Stress Exposure \((3 \text{ items/} \alpha = .78; \text{the occurrence of time pressure, high workload and complex tasks})\).

*Part 2: Performance failure*

Four self-made items intended to measure performance was in the same way factor analyzed (principal axis factoring), with the result that one outcome variable named Performance Failure was formed \((4 \text{ items/} \alpha = .81; \text{that the subject perceives him- or herself or the group failing with a task/decision or to identify alternatives of action})\).

*Part 3: Stress reactions and group dynamics*

This third part consisted of 16 self-made items, with the intent of measuring relevant experiences during the exercise, like stress reactions and the presence of maladaptive group dynamics. The items were formulated to map effects of stress on cognitive capacity shown in empirical research (see e.g. Wallenius, 2001). This included the assumption that stress exposure could have both positive and negative implications. The formulations of the group climate items were mainly inspired by the symptoms of groupthink as formulated by Janis (1972). This part was complemented with six items from a questionnaire developed by Eid et al. (2004), measuring situation awareness and personal influence.

Dimensional analysis of the 22 items measuring Stress Reactions and Group Dynamics was performed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The software STREAMS – STRuctural EquAtion Modeling made Simple (Gustafsson & Stahl, 1996) – was used in combination with Amos 3.6.

A hierarchical approach was used to test the occurrence of both a general, and residual, factors. An advantage with this kind of model is that the general influence, which may be present in practically all questionnaires, can be controlled for, leaving the residual (specific) factors as purified, refined measures to be evaluated and researched. The G-factor can in this context be
assumed to represent a general attitude from the subjects to the exercise and their own functioning.

An orthogonal model consisting of a general factor including all 22 items and 5 residual factors was developed through interplay between model improvement suggestions based on modification indices (indicating significantly correlated errors) and own judgments based on the substance of the manifest items. The statistical goodness-of-fit of the model and the empirical outcome was acceptable; an RMSEA of 0.042 was obtained and the chi-square value (264.74) was acceptable in relation to the degrees of freedom (186; p < 0.001). The t values of the general and all residual factors but the Negative Stress Reactions factor were significant and the factor loadings of all the items were statistically significant. Two items were included in the General Factor only.

Testing the internal consistency of the scales implied that one item (“The exercise feels tough”) was dropped from Positive Stress Reaction. The number of items, scale reliability, and content of the stress and group dynamic scales was accordingly as follows: Positive Stress Reaction (2 items/α = .68; the occurrence of concentration and feelings of challenge), Negative Stress Reaction (5 items/α=.80; the occurrence of cognitive malfunctioning, failure in cognitive focusing, loss of control, and worry for personal embarrassment), Maladaptive Group Dynamics (5 items/α=.75; the occurrence of commanders forcing through bad decisions, difficulties to express divergent views, conflicts in the group, prestigious atmosphere, and lack of openness), Situation Awareness (4 items/α=.66; that the subject is aware of the success criteria of the exercise, of the situation for friendly and enemy forces, and that the subject understands what happens during the exercise), and Personal Influence (3 items/α=.64, that the group chooses the best alternative and that the group has been sensitive to the subjects proposals and contribution).

**Part 4: Personality**

The fourth part was a short-version personality questionnaire based on the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrea, 1992). The items were selected from the International Personality Inventory Pool (IPIP, 2001) with the aim of assessing relevant personality aspects of the military population. The questionnaire consisted of 36 items divided amongst six facets, similar to factors of the NEO PI-R (see Bäccman, 2005). Neuroticism was divided into two facets. The first one N1 (3 items/α=.60) contained items concerning self-esteem and the second, N2 (4 items/α=.65), contained items concerning stress tolerance. The other facets were Extraversion (4 items/α=.66), Openness to Experience (12 items/α=.85), Agreeableness (4 items/α=.86), and Conscientiousness (9 items/α=.79).

**Procedure**

The questionnaire was administered during the first half of the exercise in paper form during the Tactical Staff Duty Exercise and in digital web-based form during the Maritime/Air Force Staff Exercise.
**Statistics and Analysis**

Reliability was estimated through Cronbach’s Alpha. Subgroup differences were measured using one-way ANOVA. The relative impact of potential predictors was analyzed through bivariate correlations and linear regression analysis.

Twenty-nine subgroups were identified with specific functions within the staff, such as logistics, planning, intelligence, and current operations. These ranged from 4 to 23 in size. Mean, maximum, minimum, SD, and range values on each predictor variable were calculated for each group. These values were correlated with outcome mean (Performance Failure) to explore the impact of individual differences within the group.

**Results**

*What Explains Performance Failures in the Staff?*

The factors that correlate most with Performance Failures are Negative Stress Reactions and Maladaptive Group Dynamics (see Figure 1). Also Situation Awareness and Stress Exposure correlated significantly, as well as Personal Influence. Otherwise, the stress-related variables correlated among themselves, which Personal Influence, Situation Awareness, and Maladaptive Group Dynamics also did. The latter variables also correlated with Negative Stress Reaction. Personality had a significant but modest correlation with Negative Stress Reaction, Personal Influence and Situation Awareness.

![Diagram of correlations between variables](image)

Figure 1. Graphic illustration of the correlations between the variables. Thin line implies correlation between .16 and .30, middle line implies correlation between .30 and .45, and thick line implies correlation between .45 and .55. All correlations are significant at the .01 level.
The linear regression analysis indicates that personality added little in predicting the outcome. As shown in Table 2 Neuroticism (Self esteem) and Agreeableness has a significant effect on outcome in step 1, when only personality factors are included. This effect disappears in step 2, when all factors are included. The best predictors of the outcome were accordingly Maladaptive Group Dynamics, Stress Exposure, lack of Situation Awareness and Negative Stress Reactions. Positive Stress Reactions and Personal Influence did not contribute significantly.

### Table 1
**Summary of Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Performance Failure (N=250)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism 1</td>
<td>-.337</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>-.253 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism 2</td>
<td>-.088</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>-.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.082</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Openness</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>-.163</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>-.152 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>-.124</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>-.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism 1</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
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<td>Neuroticism 2</td>
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<td>.055</td>
<td>-.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
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<td>.065</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.061</td>
<td>-.041</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>-.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Exposure</td>
<td>.204</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.232 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Stress Reaction</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Stress Reaction</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.160 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maladaptive Group Dynamics</td>
<td>.357</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.401 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation Awareness</td>
<td>-.161</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>-.174 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Influence</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>-.077</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. R² = .110 for step 1 and .469 for step 2. ΔR² = .088 for step 1 and .442 for step 2 (p < .001).
* p ≤ .05  **p ≤ .01  *** p ≤ .001.
**Aggregation of Analysis to Group Level**

The impact of individual differences and internal distribution within the group is less obvious. As shown in Table 3, two group measures, mean and maximum, correlated significantly with the outcome of four of the variables, but no significant effect was found for group diversity measures, like SD and range. The correlation with maximum value implies that the individual, who experienced most stress exposure, stress reactions, and maladaptive group dynamics, significantly increased the amount of performance failures, while the individual who experienced the least of the same variables had no corresponding effect. There was no significant correlation between group size and Performance Failure.

**Table 2**

*The correlation (Pearson) between Performance Failure (mean value) and group measures on the explanatory variables (N= 29)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Max value</th>
<th>Min value</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Stress Exposure</td>
<td>.541 **</td>
<td>.427 *</td>
<td>.290</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>.016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Stress Reaction</td>
<td>.372 *</td>
<td>.391 *</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Stress Reaction</td>
<td>.500 **</td>
<td>.403 *</td>
<td>.337</td>
<td>.129</td>
<td>.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maladaptive Group Dynamics</td>
<td>.574 **</td>
<td>.412 *</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situation Awareness</td>
<td>-.311</td>
<td>-.140</td>
<td>-.360</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.214</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Influence</td>
<td>-.358</td>
<td>-.328</td>
<td>-.227</td>
<td>-.289</td>
<td>-.050</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05 **p ≤ .01

**Discussion**

Generally, the present study shows that important predictors of performance failures in a staff are maladaptive group dynamics, negative stress reactions, (lack of) situation awareness, and high stress exposure. Positive stress reactions and personality factors have less impact. The study gives some support to Janis groupthink model, in the sense that there is a significant relation between stress, group dynamics and performance in homogenous staff groups.

It is reasonable that stress reactions, lack of situation awareness, and maladaptive group dynamics have a causal effect on performance. It is, however, also reasonable that the causal connections are bidirectional. Performance failures can, besides being an outcome, also be a stressor that affects stress reactions and group climate. Generally, the two-way arrows in Figure 1 illustrate the assumption that the relation between most of the variables
is bidirectional. It is not meaningful to claim that one variable causes another one, rather they reinforce or weaken each other during the process, which the staff exercise is. The exception is personality, which is not assumed to be affected by the exercise.

It was assumed in the design that the diversity, that is the relative homogeneity or heterogeneity of the group on different variables, could affect outcome. It is, however, not clear when a homogenous respectively a heterogeneous group is preferable. The groupthink model implies an assumption that heterogeneity may decrease the probability for groupthink to occur, but it concerns ideological and personal values and not, for example, stress coping ability. The relative importance of homogeneity and heterogeneity could be dependent on several conditions regarding the group, its task, and its internal structure. The present study is explorative in this sense, but no significant effect on the outcome could be related to group diversity measures.

Since the study was done in an exercise context, there is the obvious question about external validity. The stress level of an exercise, even a realistic one, may be significantly lower compared with a real crisis. A real-life stressor hard to simulate is the consequences of a decision failure. On the other hand, it is possible that the stressor of being judged in the educational context to some extent will compensate for this. There is no life threat, but there may be more or less of a perceived threat to personal career and status. Concerning external validity, it may also be important to note that the population of high-level military officers is homogenous because of selection and socialization processes. This implies a restricted variation on almost all included variables.

The use of self-made measures implies lack of reference data from other contexts and that we have less knowledge of the validity. An important aim of future research within this area is therefore to further develop these measures to be statistically more solid. Self-report data on outcome could preferably be complemented with independent judgments. It may also be an important aim in future research to gain deeper understanding of the importance of the internal structure of the group, for instance, the importance of good and bad deviators from the group.

The study highlights, however, some important weak links in staff work. Even with selected personnel, good tactical ambitions, and advanced technical equipment, there is obviously still risk that decisions will be inferior. One main problem is that the staff itself may be unaware of many of these processes, while in the situation. It is accordingly important in any training of personnel in collective decision-making during stress, to create awareness of these processes and the implications of them.

References


Author Note
I would like to give credit to Professor Gerry Larsson, the leader of this research project, for his valuable help with the structural equation modeling, and to the other member of the research team, Charlotte Bäccman, for her valuable help with the personality measurement. Both of them have also contributed in several other ways to the study. This research project was supported by grants from the Swedish Armed Forces.
EPILOGUE AND EVALUATION OF A CONFERENCE

Stefan Jern

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues!

I am honoured for having been asked to evaluate this fifth GRASP conference. I would much have preferred to do this in collaboration with you all, as a piece of action research. But, alas, time did not permit, so I decided to recruit a panel of distinguished, but deceased, group researchers and social psychologists, all active in the Golden Days of Small Group Research.

With the kind assistance of professor Etzel Cardeña, recently appointed to the Poul Thorsen chair of parapsychology at Lund University, contact was established with nine such persons, regrettably all male, from the golden days of small group research, and they agreed to follow this conference up above and down below in order to share their impressions with us. Here follows their report:

“Dear future colleagues,

We thank you for the opportunity to follow your work during these two days and now give our feedback.

As most of us attended the World Congress of Psychology 1952 in Stockholm, we are delighted to be back once again in your beautiful country. As you may understand, we would prefer to remain anonymous in order not to cause any splits in your fragile Nordic community. Let us, however, reveal that we are evenly distributed to Hell and Heaven and that most of us residing in Heaven consider group life as Hell in Heaven, whereas those of us, who spend eternity in Hell, consider group life as Heaven in Hell.

We do regret that brothers Floyd and Gordon have gone fishing for the weekend and that Kurt is conducting a field experiment on bandy teams in the Elysian Fields. Therefore they have not been able to take part in the writing up of this report. We are convinced that their participation would have increased the quality of this paper.

You seem to live in a world so different from ours! We lived in a post-war world, prosperous and optimistic, but marred by the threat of an imminent third world war, where nuclear mushroom clouds would herald the end of civilisation. Yes, we did live on the edge.

You seem to live in a world not so prosperous but not so optimistic. Other threats have emerged. Pollution of the environment is one. Another obviously is seemingly haphazard violence within and between nations. It has become clear to us that you have given up prediction. The search for a grand theory has ended
and you no longer strive for the unity of science, which we still cherish as a sacred value. Yes, you seem to live on another edge.

Judging from our first impressions, your world has become less formal. You dress in more causal ways and avoid formal address when you talk to each other. Senior researchers and doctoral students socialize in ways unthinkable to us.

At first we were surprised to see that so many of you brought along your female secretaries and research assistants, soon to find out that women have entered the fields of group and social research. We are truly amazed, and find that a good thing!

We are deeply intrigued by the way a presentation is usually introduced: the presenters greet their audiences by turning their backs to them, leaning over the table touching the back of a flat grey box while muttering to themselves. This usually goes on for a couple of minutes while the audience patiently awaits the illumination of a white screen where beautiful tables appear. It seems a wonderful device to us, but we miss the humming from the big green Bell & Howell, 16 mm, film projectors we used in our days.

As to the theories and methods you use, much of it is fairly familiar to us, as we invented them, even though Leon is surprised by how far you have taken the model of cognitive dissonance. And we are happy to note that the strange claim “groups are bad for you”, has been questioned by proponents of what you call the Social Identity Perspective! We also enjoyed the branch working on justice issues. In general your theoretical and methodological scope is very broad, sometimes on the edge of becoming fragmented, but mostly sound. Even though we are dedicated empiricists and experimenters, we are delighted to notice that you still do theoretical work. You are not satisfied to refine familiar models but develop new and sophisticated ones. The same goes for methods, albeit some of them are quite alien to us, such as e.g. grounded theory and modelling techniques.

We also note, with pleasure, that you address a wide range of pressing social issues, from students’ learning to social conflict and justice on a wider scale. Good! Very good! Keep that important work up!

We are, however, a little bit worried about the areas you choose for your research. The educational system, the health system, the army, and the police are important, but what about working life? Not much about the corporate world and industry, nor about the producing sectors or about the increasing areas of knowledge based service. And what about the huge markets of entertainment and tourism? May it be that you are too closely affiliated with the institutions of the, regrettably, decaying welfare state?

Last, but not least: you seem to be a rather marginal horde in Academe, widely scattered, and poorly financed with few research centres. You freely use concepts such as network and net-centric which are foreign to us, except for the
little we know about telegraphs and telephones, but we understand that this may be what keeps you going, i.e. networking!

So, our advice is, that you continue to meet in this way with fairly low thresholds for acceptance of contributions but a strong and critical peer-review of the proceedings that we presume will be published.

Therefore, we have secured a vow from the group at Lund University that it will aim at arranging the 6th conference there in 2008.

We wish you all good luck!

Yours sincerely,

Gustave, Wilfred, Elton, Muzaffer, Solomon, Robert, Leon, Stanley and Henri
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