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**Emotions in Research
and Everyday Life.
From Feeling to Acting**

by

Beata Pawłowska

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Beata Pawłowska



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Beata Pawłowska 
University of Lodz, Poland

Editorial

Emotions in Research and Everyday Life. From Feeling to Acting

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Although the issue of emotions is not new as a domain of studies for many scientific disciplines, it remains seldomly exploited within the area of sociology. And yet, it seems clear that no individual and their emotions can be studied without taking into account their social and cultural contexts (Shott 1979; Goffman 1961; 1967; 1974; 2006; Scheff 1990; Ekman and Davidson 1994; 2012; Goleman 1995; 1997; Salovey and Sluyter 1999; Wisecup, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2006). Sociologists attempt to investigate how emotions are triggered, as well as both interpreted and expressed through one's participation in various social groups (see, e.g., Collins 1975; 1981; Kemper 1978; 1991; Scheff 1979; 1988; Hochschild 1983; 2009). Initially, attempts were channeled at finding a common definition of emotions, which would highlight their diverse aspects for different approaches. And so, attention was paid to: 1) the cognitive dimension of the situation; 2) stimulation of physiological reactions; 3) giving the reactions names referring to culturally available concepts; 4) expressing and holding feelings back in a culturally adapted and accepted (imposed) way (see: Wisecup, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2006). Just as

efforts were made to find a common definition, they were also made to develop a common methodological approach. However, the multitude of accepted paradigms did not allow for the construction of one meta-theoretical framework. Despite many studies on emotions in various scientific domains and contexts, the question regarding their nature remains open. As social sciences develop, we know more and more about emotions. However, due to the fact that emotions remain in the sphere of individual experience, are one's natural and spontaneous qualities, to this day there is no clear indication what they are, when they arise, what they depend on, and how to manage them (see: Pawłowska 2013).

Sociology of emotions deals with social conditions behind the emergence of emotions, their dynamics and timing, and emotionality in the individual and interactional, community and organizational dimensions. It refers to the achievements of many scientific disciplines, mainly psychology, social psychology, microsociology, and cultural anthropology. Explaining emotional behavior and actions, it refers to many sociological theories. At the same time, most of the studies touching on the issue of emotions are underpinned by interactionist approach (e.g., Goffman, Hochschild, Gordon, Thoits, Clark, Shott, Averill, Collins, Cooley, Stryker, Burke, Heise, Scheff, Tangeney, Romans, Blau, Emerson, Johnson and Ford, Lawler, Hegtvedt, Cook, Kemper, Berger, Barbalet, Wentworth, Turner, Hammond, and others). Describing feelings, the paradigm at hand refers to giving rise to an emerging experience, in which social conditions play a role. Those factors prod emotions before their arousal, but also as they unfold (Pawłowska 2013).

Regardless of the theoretical concept adapted, it should be noted that modern everyday life is full of diversity, tension, stress, and uncertainty, which may be due, among others, to the very fast pace of civilization development. It entails that individuals constantly reconstruct and define the emotions of their interactional partners, as well as do emotional work, including managing their emotions. The issue of emotions in everyday life is now considered one of the more promising areas of sociological analyses, since it allows capturing and interpreting the behavior of a social actor on yet another level. This volume presents emotions arising and defined in different social worlds and having a different emotional load. It shows the dilemmas of the researchers of emotions, indicating that what seems to be personal and private not always turns out to be so, and vice versa—what seems collective, external, and general can become personal and impact the role the researcher is about to take in the field. While examining emotions, we, ourselves, often do emotional work. It may be due to reducing stress, as well as the researcher's desire to achieve a balance between distance and closeness when it comes to relations with the study participants.

How diverse everyday emotional life can be and how feelings affect individual activities is shown in the articles included in this issue, which starts with the paper by Jan K. Coetzee, entitled *Narrating Emotions: Towards Deeper Understanding*. The author elaborates on the importance of qualitative research, as well as the interpretivist approach, when it comes to exploring the issues of emotions, for qualitative research can bring us closer to a fuller description and interpretation of life. People's narratives are referred

to as most effective in revealing deeper dimensions of experience and of meaning, which, as postulated by the author, should be read against the background of the empirical reality in which they are embedded. Referring to, among others, the culture and political situation of South Africa, Jan K. Coetzee observes that episodes of emotional sharing can be seen as opening a path for a hermeneutical process towards understanding. Emotional narratives always reflect personal experiences and allow us to understand structural obstacles in the pursuit of social order.

The second article by Beata Pawłowska—*Pride in Teachers' Everyday Work. Conditions and Contexts*—refers to pride as an emotion that allows triggering socially expected behaviors, such as satisfaction and motivation to work. On the example of a group of teachers, the author answers the question of what role pride plays in teachers' career building process and their daily work. The article highlights the importance of pride in the process of creating the employee's identity. Also, it is the only article in the issue that describes a positive emotion, advocating that it is worth examining emotions that contribute to maintaining social bonds—at a level seen by the interactants as constructive and integrating.

Emma Engdahl, in her article *The Disappearance of the Other: A Note on the Distortion of Love*, relates to issues of love that can be toxic and depressing. It can “drain” interaction partners, leading to the silencing of one of them. Referring to various concepts (Hegel, Giddens, Illouz, Honneth, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Bauman), as well as empirical data, the author interestingly guides the reader through the world of love

and points out that, in the modern understanding of the phenomenon, love as a game that can be played without mutual recognition of one another can lead to depression. That distortion of love results in a tendency of not letting go of the lost love objects and a need for strategies to handle the absence of love in intimate relationships.

The paper “*Living with Illegal Feelings*”—*Analysis of the Internet Discourse on Negative Emotions towards Children and Motherhood*, by Emilia Garncarek, illustrates negative feelings associated with being a mother. The author shed light on women's internal struggles with emerging emotions that are not socially accepted. Recognizing motherhood as universally desirable, society expects of women (mothers) to be content, joyful, and proud—thus providing a cultural interpretative framework referring to which women that do not feel socially expected emotions, instead experience frustration, fear, and stress. Such women feel guilt and shame. Those who regret motherhood redefine their identity, which can cause depression, or lead to the breakdown of family bonds. The purpose of the article is to show the socio-cultural conditions affecting the way mothers express emotions and feelings stemming from regretting motherhood.

Asta Rau, in her article *Dealing with Feeling: Emotion, Affect, and the Qualitative Research Encounter*, postulates the study of emotions by examining their manifestations in action. She refers to the work of Margaret Wetherell. The author believes that, when taken together, action and practice imply pattern and order, form and function, process and consequences. It is thus elucidating to see how emotions

as observed, as well as the ones arising in the effect of such observations have an impact on the qualitative researcher and the research they conduct. Endorsing mindfulness as a valuable approach to manage the researcher's subjectivity in the qualitative research encounter, the article may be seen as an invitation to further considerations on studying and—as a result—experiencing—emotions.

It should be stated here that sociology of emotions may become an inspiration for researchers operating in disciplines other than sociology. Embedding the study of emotions in the education area, Renata Górska, in the paper entitled *Emotional Education Discourses: Between Developing Competences and Deepening Emotional (Co-)Understanding*, indicates the importance of emotional education understood as an activity for the emotional development. The author emphasizes the importance of the relationship between emotions and education. Although the considerations presented in the article are of theoretical

nature, by reference to qualitative research conducted based on two different approaches to emotional education—technological-instrumental and humanistic-critical—the author shows how important the permeability of disciplines is. Emotional education can play an important role in developing pro-social attitudes, functioning of individuals in local communities, and building civil society.

In this volume, emotions are recognized as being a central element of human experience, affecting the functioning of social worlds and their internal order. They play a crucial role in bonding processes, as well as may shape the form they take. Emotions are subject to social control and social structuring. They are associated with social roles (see: Binder, Palska, and Pawlik 2009:9-10). I hope that this volume will contribute to increasing the interest of researchers in the field of emotions and, at least slightly, bring about further development of sociology of emotions as an important sociological subdiscipline.

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Narrating Emotions: Towards Deeper Understanding

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Abstract Qualitative research aims at unwrapping the ordinary and the exceptional in order to bring us closer to a complete description and interpretation of life. People's narratives are particularly effective in revealing deeper dimensions of experience and of meaning. Narratives always need to be read against the background of the empirical reality in which they are embedded. Most of the narratives referred to in this article are situated against the empirical reality of South Africa as a society in transition, still marred by inequality and inequity. One narrative, from a project conducted in the Czech Republic, shares some contextual characteristics with the South African examples—the Czech Republic is also a society in transition, previously employing institutional violence to suppress political dissent.

An important aspect when dealing with intense political and social transformation is the presence of highly charged feelings and emotions. As part of the contextualization for this article I briefly argue that the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1996-1998) in many ways did the groundwork for a new appreciation of the sharing of emotional accounts and revelations pertaining to atrocities, injustices, and suffering. This Commission's work prepared the way for recognition of the potential of such sharing to create a better understanding of the experience of life in a deeply divided context.

In the article, I argue for the establishment of a *social encounter*—a concept frequently used in the micro-sociological writings of Randall Collins—between researcher and research participant in an attempt to come to deeper levels of understanding. During episodes of emotional sharing of experiences and feelings a research participant often reveals deeper levels of social interaction—these revelations have the potential to open the way for a hermeneutical process towards understanding. Dramatic recall can lead to reconstructing a story that contains all the elements of what was originally heard, seen, and felt.

The article uses five examples of narratives containing moments of high levels of emotion—each example opening the way for better understanding of the experiences of the research participants.

Keywords Narrative; Understanding; Empirical Reality; Social Encounter; Hermeneutics; Engagement; Empathy; Emotion

Jan K. Coetzee is a Senior Professor Emeritus and Director of the program *The Narrative Study of Lives* in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. His most recent publication is the book *Narrating the Everyday: Windows on Life in Central South Africa* (SUN MeDIA, 2019) (together with Asta Rau and Magdalena Wojciechowska). He is a practicing visual artist and his latest art focuses on books as documents of

life, using old texts juxtaposed with found and sculpted objects to draw attention to the book as a symbolic knowledge object and potential source of criticality. His monographs, *Books & Bones & Other Things* (SUN PRESS, 2018) and *The Book & The Skull* (SUN MeDIA, 2020), contain examples of this work.

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Qualitative Research and Understanding

The qualitative researcher aims at bringing the practice of sociology closer to understanding. In their introduction to *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2011:3-4), Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln refer to the objective of qualitative research as the use of materials such as personal experience, introspection, lifestory, interview, artifacts, and texts to describe, in order to understand, routine and exceptional moments and meanings in people's lives. It is in particular to understanding, and to exceptional moments, unique experiences, and sensitive meanings that this article turns. In a similar vein, John Creswell (2013:44) alludes to the qualitative researcher's continuous desire to unwrap the exceptional to bring about "complex descriptions and interpretations of the problem" that will lead to breaking open the "meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." Ultimately, the qualitative sociologist wants to use the research subject's rich descriptions—including descriptions of the exceptional and the sensitive—in order to reach fruitful explanations and new integrations of meaning, interpretation, and understanding.

Understanding through Narratives

It is commonly accepted that few methods capture meaning, experience, subjectivity, the lifeworld, reflexivity, and action as effectively as narratives. When people tell coherent and meaningful stories, embedded in a particular context, they reveal insights into their own, as well as others' experiences. Narratives provide accounts of how particular phenomena came to be what they are, how those phenomena take on different meanings in different settings, and how individuals do/perform/constitute social life.

A narrative captures the importance of context, the meaningfulness of human experience, thought, and speech within time and place; it provides opportunity to understand implicit, as well as explicit rationales for action within a holistic framework...the narrative approach is seeking comprehensiveness of understanding within the individual case. [Bazeley 2013:342]

Any research program based on the narrative study of lives frequently goes beyond employing the narrative of an individual research participant. A single

narrative can provide comprehensive understanding, but most of the time several research participants share their lifestories. “Narrative understanding is a dynamic process, and narrative meaning accrues by degrees” (Popova 2015:n.p.). The unfolding of perspectives and events is usually constructed by several narrators, and meaning is almost always constructed over multiple interviewing sessions. Multiple narrative sessions have the potential to create a mosaic or tapestry in which individual elements can be woven together to reconstruct singular scenarios or where a combination of elements can constitute the comprehensive picture. Seldom is it possible to assemble a picture of the full reality in one data collection session. Our reconstructions of other people’s constructions mostly happen incrementally. The deeper the levels of sensitivity, the more refined our research approaches—and the more delicate our lenses need to be in order to dissect the complex layers in the unwrapping of meaning. In order to reach deeper levels of sensitivity and to dissect the complex layers of meaning, the narrative researcher needs to establish a sympathetic encounter with the participant. To establish sensitive rapport requires specific efforts and an astutely developed awareness on the part of the researcher.

To put forward arguments for the potential of narrative research to unlock our understanding of our research participants’ lifeworlds is nothing new. Ken Plummer (2001:2), for example, emphasizes these requirements when he contextualizes the use of narratives as:

getting close to living human beings, accurately yet imaginatively picking up the way they express their

understandings of the world around them, perhaps providing an analysis of such expressions, presenting them in interesting ways, and being self-critically aware of the immense difficulties such tasks bring.

To understand their experiences, to share in their feelings, and to attach meaning in the same way as they do, the researcher needs to take every opportunity to enter the participants’ lifeworlds. An important epistemological element in qualitative research design—described above by Plummer as the ability of “accurately yet imaginatively picking up the way they express”—entails sensitivity from the side of the researcher to detect all the dimensions in the narrative of the participant. Without exploiting emotional dimensions, the researcher should provide opportunities and a safe environment to the research participant to share her/his feelings. Whilst guarding against overstepping the protective boundaries set by sound ethical practice, the researcher can reach a deeper understanding of the research participant’s lived experiences when utilizing intersubjective rapport during moments of emotional sharing.

Narrating Life in the Context of Empirical Reality

In the previous section, I stress that narrative and biographical studies have the potential to provide natural vehicles for unlocking our understanding of deeper levels of meaning and experience, but that this process of unlocking will not happen automatically. The very essence of lifestory research—especially in as far as narrative inquiry, life history, and, to a lesser extent, oral history are concerned—is that

it can provide an epistemological basis for a wide scope of deeply personal knowledge and experience of everyday reality, of local and indigenous practices, of cultural transmission, and of community engagement. Lifestory data can, however, never be accepted as “unmediated representations of social realities,” as Atkinson and Delamont (2009:316) caution. The researcher employing a narrative study of lives by necessity has to engage in a reflexive process of questioning how the experience of social reality in people’s narratives relates to historical truths, and how it is logically consistent with other forms of our understanding of social reality.

The fact that data from narrative research cannot be accepted merely on face value brings me to the main point in this section. Any form of narrative research requires us to undertake a double reading in which we read and interpret research participants’ narratives against the background of the empirical reality in which their narratives are embedded. This view stems directly from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and the emphasis that he places on “methodological relationalism” (cf. Bourdieu 1989; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). In terms of this, Bourdieu acknowledges both the intersubjective and the objective dimensions of the nature of reality. These two dimensions constitute a double life and necessitate a double reading. There should always be a complementary application of two divergent modes of analyzing: the quantitative analysis of the social structure (referred to by Bourdieu as the social physics) and the qualitative exploration of meaning-frameworks (that Bourdieu calls the social phenomenology) underlying the experiences of the individuals constituting these social structures (cf. Bourdieu 1990). By

following the principles set out by Bourdieu’s methodological relationalism, the narrative researcher acknowledges the importance of analyzing the intersubjective—and often deeply emotional—dimensions of the research participant’s accounts within the context of objectivated phenomena. Bourdieu employs the concepts “habitus” and “field” to elaborate on the double reading. The concept “habitus” is analogous to the confluence of self-experience, biographical situation, stock of knowledge, narrative repertoire, and meaningful action. The concept “field” refers to the given situation in which the subject finds her- or himself and includes concrete physical and objective aspects of reality, as well as socially constructed meaning-frameworks (Wacquant 1989).

All the examples in this article—except for the case material in the first example—come from research undertaken in South Africa, a society in transition. The first example is taken from comparative research done in South Africa and the Czech Republic, and deals with a narrative describing subjective experience within the context of a society undergoing radical transformation. As was the case in apartheid South Africa, the state in the former Czechoslovakia dealt harshly with political opponents. Dissent often lead to imprisonment and the narratives describing the trauma of long-term incarceration in these two countries strike similar notes. For the purposes of this article, I will not delve deeper into the objective “field” or “social physics”—as distinguished by Bourdieu—of the pre-democratic Czechoslovakia. In many ways the concrete, physical, and objective reality of political prisoners in these two countries were similar. I selected the narrative contained in

the first example because it provides the clearest indication that I have come across in my academic career of the way in which a highly emotional moment during an interview can trigger a personal out-pouring that pictures graphically and accurately how a research participant experienced a particular situation.

In as far as the other 4 examples are concerned: they all come from different research projects undertaken in South Africa. In addition to this similarity, the 4 examples have in common that all those research participants belong to what can be described as previously disadvantaged communities. All these participants are classified as Black African South Africans—previously subjected to institutional racism and to the cumulative effects of apartheid legislation.

Few countries have ever been as reviled by the international community as the apartheid state established by the National Party of South Africa since it came to power in 1948. Institutionalized and legally enshrined racism enforced a culture of separation, inequality, and isolation. A person's race determined every aspect of her/his life: where she/he could live, whom she/he could marry, her/his quality of formal education, access to medical care, social services, legal protection, and property rights to which she/he would be entitled. In the wider context of the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 and of the end of the Cold War, South Africa negotiated a new dispensation under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. In April 1994, this country's first democratic elections took place and South Africa became democratically free.

The remnants and shadows of South Africa's past did not disappear with the dawn of this new dispensation. Now a country with a constitution lauded as among the most enlightened in the world, South Africa remains marred by inequality and inequity. The case studies referred to in this article illustrate some of the inequalities and inequities that persist in this country's post-democratic era. There is no doubt that oral history and narrative accounts can play a significant role in contributing towards democratization. How we remember and experience the past is important in terms of how we will deal with our present situation. It is important to determine to what extent the injustices of the past are still part of our lives in the present. By narrating our experiences, feelings, and insecurities we come to deal with transitions and traumas. Narrative accounts can help us to understand how we experience, and celebrate, cultural diversity and everyday aspects of our identities.

One of the most important aspects when dealing with intense political and social transition, democratization, previous injustices, and suffering is the unwrapping of sensitive feelings and emotions. Shortly after the end of apartheid in 1994 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up in South Africa (South African History Online 2017). This Commission, a body similar to a court of law where testimony is heard, provided an opportunity to anybody who felt to have been a victim of the violence and injustice perpetrated during the apartheid years to come forward and tell her/his story. Similarly, perpetrators of apartheid's violence and crimes could give testimony, disclose their actions, and apply for amnesty from prosecution. From the

beginnings of the formal hearings in April 1996, until the presentation of the TRC's report in October 1998, hardly a day went by without the South African society being exposed to highly emotional accounts and revelations pertaining to atrocities, injustices, and suffering.

For the first time in South Africa's history, the emotion-filled accounts of representatives of the majority of its people could be heard. The contribution of the hearings of the TRC towards a new appreciation of the potential to bring into the public domain emotional accounts of deeply-experienced events cannot be over-emphasized. Traditional sociological instruments such as the analysis of documents, survey questionnaires, observations, and discussions within small groups cannot provide adequate insights towards fully understanding the deeper levels of experience, remembering, and accounting for the role and effects of the past on our present-day reality. Research reports and other documents from South Africa's pre-democratic dispensation rarely incorporate the voices of the previously disadvantaged and disenfranchised. Because of their political exclusion they were hidden from historical accounts and their views seldom played a role in the reconstruction and representation of reality. The TRC undoubtedly contributed to an expansion of highly emotional everyday discourses about everyday life. In many ways, this Commission provided important principles for employing sensitive narratives containing emotion and affect. It is against this background that I argue for researchers to employ constant awareness of the epistemological value of utilizing personal and—sometimes—highly charged disclosures when collecting data.

The Hermeneutic Process

From the preceding arguments it is clear: One of the primary aims of qualitative research in general, and of the use of narratives containing emotion and affect in particular, is to explore deeper levels of experience of ordinary people. Liz Stanley (2013:6) summarizes this aim as follows:

The narrative, biographical and documents of life approach has its eye on the complexities of social life, differences between people and their points of view, and the importance of the contextual and situational.

Research by means of narratives focuses in general on the biographical descriptions that people give of their everyday life experiences. In order to unlock as much as possible of the "complexities of social life" (as Stanley describes the aim of biographical research) the qualitative researcher needs to follow a hermeneutical path that will lead to the unwrapping of these complexities. The biographical descriptions that we most commonly use can be contained in a research participant's autobiography, auto-ethnography, lifestory, or in documents of life such as diaries or memoranda. Most of the time biographic descriptions come from in-depth interviews. And it is during in-depth interviews that the opportunity arises for unlocking aspects of the "complexities of social life" (Stanley 2013:6). These interviews are usually conversational, dialogical, informal or semi-structured, open-ended, reflexive, collaborative, or guided. But, in order for these interviews to break open meaning and to bring about deeper understanding, they must become social encounters between researcher and participant. With the

researcher initiating and guiding, the participant collaborates by producing accounts or versions of her/his past, present, or future actions, experiences, aspirations, thoughts, and feelings. During this dialectical process of *researcher initiating* → *participant collaborating* → *researcher guiding* → *participant revealing* a social encounter is created.

Randall Collins (2004:43) elaborates on the idea of a social encounter when he relates it to the micro-sociological basis of interaction ritual theory. The qualitative interview, as a form of social encounter based on and leading to deeper levels of social interaction, establishes a hermeneutical path to understanding. The social encounter and interaction between researcher and research participant provides a possibility—as well as a vehicle—for unwrapping intense moments of experience. Collins (2004:43) refers to these social encounters as rituals of interaction:

These are the events that we remember, that give meaning to our personal biographies, and sometimes to obsessive attempts to repeat them: whether participating in some great collective event such as a big political demonstration; or as a spectator at some storied moment of popular entertainment or sports; or a personal encounter ranging from a sexual experience, to a strongly bonding friendly exchange, to a humiliating insult; the social atmosphere of an alcohol binge, a drug high, or a gambling victory; a bitter argument or an occasion of violence. Where these moments have a high degree of focused awareness and a peak of shared emotion, these personal experiences, too, can be crystalized in personal symbols, and kept alive in symbolic replays for greater or lesser expanses of one's

life. These are the significant formative experiences that shape individuals; if the patterns endure, we are apt to call them personalities; if we disapprove of them, we call them addictions. But, this usage too easily reifies what is an ongoing flow of situations. The movement of individuals from one situation to another in what I call interaction ritual chains is an up-and-down of variation in the intensity of interaction rituals; shifts in behavior, in feeling and thought occur just as the situations shift. To be a constant personality is to be on an even keel where the kinds of interaction rituals flow constantly from one situation to the next.

Narrative studies largely operate within an idealist theory of knowledge where descriptions of people's intentions, interpretive understanding, intersubjectivity, engagement, and empathy are important elements towards the unwrapping of meaning. The aim to reach subjective understanding or interpretation goes hand-in-hand with a hermeneutical process of using emotion and affect as conduits into deeper levels of experience. The encounters, exchanges, and interactions between researcher and research subject are most of the time recorded and transcribed. This leads to the construction of a text that not only contains a record of what was said, it also encapsulates the intentions, hopes, suffering, fears, and joys of the research participants. Hermeneutics becomes the process through which deeper understanding is restored and meaning unwrapped (Outhwaite 1987:62). This unwrapping of meaning takes place through a "dialogical relationship between interpreter and text; the dialectic between question and answer" (Bleicher 1982:73).

When interpreting/analyzing narratives, we need to understand that the social reality they reveal is

intrinsically dynamic and complex. It represents an intricate fusion of human agency, structures, and contexts within which social action takes place and within which meaning is constructed. None of these components is exact, given, or fixed; each presupposes the other. [Cf. in this regard my remarks on Bourdieu's proposed "double reading" and his emphasis on "methodological relationalism" in the previous section.] As narrative analysts, our understanding is based on interpretation, and we need to draw on all available dimensions, including the deeper levels of subjectivity as contained in emotions and affect.

In his book on ethnography, *Tales of the Field*, John Van Maanen (1988:101-124) refers to a specific kind of narrative. In the same way as an impressionist artist strives towards capturing the totality of a scene at a specific instant or moment in time—often within the context of a specific mood—the researcher should strive towards capturing "impressionist tales." Research participants, when relating subjective and sometimes intimate detail, reveal deep meaning and lived-through experiences. The researcher and the research participant should aim to "reconstruct in dramatic form those periods" (Van Maanen 1988:102) that were subjectively experienced. An impressionist tale therefore is based on dramatic recall, on reconstructing a story that contains all the elements of what was originally heard, seen, and felt. As impressionists themselves, the research participants are not simply reflecting what happened. When telling impressionist tales, they are reflexively involved in opening up facts, speculations, details, background information, interpretive processes, ambiguities, and emotions.

Narrating Emotions: Examples of Interpretative Repertoires

I will now briefly apply the principles of looking for and capturing deeper levels of meaning, experience, subjectivity, and emotions as expressed by research participants in different projects within my program *The Narrative Study of Lives*. I focus on the different ways that research subjects are emotional during their everyday being-in-the-world. When introducing his discussion of the phenomenological paradigms in his book on social theory, David Inglis (2012:86) states that phenomenology and other interpretive approaches seek "to understand how people conceive of the world around them" and that they are "concerned with how particular persons or groups of people see, perceive, understand, experience, make sense of, respond to, emotionally feel about and engage with particular objects or circumstances." This description highlights a progressive movement towards deeper levels of understanding as the qualitative researcher moves from seeing, to perceiving, to understanding, to experiencing, to making sense of, to responding to, and eventually to emotionally feeling about and engaging with the experiences of the research subject. Following the pathway of an impressionist researcher—as pointed out by Inglis above—we are interested in the reflexive, creative doings or actions of people and the pictures they paint of their experiences, and which they hold up for the researcher to see and to share.

The cover design of Margaret Wetherell's book *Affect and Emotion* (2012) presents a conceptual map of some of the emotions that a qualitative researcher might find when researching subjectivity and in-

tersubjectivity. On the cover of the book are 12 concepts arranged in a circle like the 12 numerical indicators on the dial of a watch. The 12 concepts cover some of the important dimensions or denominators of emotion and affect: fear, panic, ecstasy, remorse, nostalgia, awe, indifference, duty, guilt, epiphany, anxiety, and fatigue. This conceptual map is, of course, far from all-encompassing and/or complete. On the positive side of the range of emotions we miss love, desire, longing and on the negative side there is no reference to hate, frustration, and repulsion—and other emotions are also missing. This cover design is certainly not meant to be complete, but it does present in graphic form a chart for the qualitative researcher to use as a guide—in a similar manner as the face of a watch indicates time as a moment in a day.

As alluded to above, the article contains 5 examples. These examples are not analyzed in order to extract specific findings contained in the brief exemplars. Suffice to mention that all these examples contain personal accounts of individual experiences. In all 5 cases, the epistemological value of personal and emotional disclosures leading to each research participant revealing further information are emphasized. After sharing the emotionally charged accounts of their respective situations, all the research participants continued to elaborate on the details of their experiences.

Long-Term Political Imprisonment

This exemplar of trauma narratives comes from an earlier longitudinal and cross-national project (1998-2002) on narratives of former political prison-

ers from South Africa and the former Czechoslovakia (Coetzee, Gilfillan, and Hulec 2002). During one of the interviews a Czech participant reflects on the immense loneliness of being a long-term prisoner and describes the emotional suffering that flows from detention in isolation:

Jiří Mesicki¹: On the night of 5 December (1951), St. Nicholas Day, we could hear beyond the prison walls the sounds of children laughing and crying out as they celebrated the day. In my mind's eye, I could see them mischievously running from place to place, dressed up as angels and devils. They were the guards' children and suddenly they reminded me of my own childhood. But, I had a grim feeling that I was going to go to another hell. So eventually, very early on 6 December, we were put into three buses and, accompanied by a panzer with a machine gun, we moved on. It was obvious that we were not going to a camp but to another prison. [Coetzee, Gilfillan, and Hulec 2002:119-120]

When talking about the evening of 5 December 1951, Mesicki could hardly contain himself. Whilst fighting back his tears he related the torture of being imprisoned with the worst of common-law criminals—murderers, rapists, and armed robbers. He continued with his account of the extreme abuse that the political prisoners endured, devoid of any semblance of human rights or their oversight. Moved by the emotional recall of his suffering, Mesicki immediately started to reflect on the effect of his harrowing experience. It is likely that without the emotional recollection of the physical circum-

¹ Birth name.

stances of his ordeal—contained in the excerpt of his narrative above—he might not have come to describe the deeply personal and subjective effects that the harrowing physical circumstances had:

After about three years, the civilian in us all—the human being—began to evaporate somehow. It disappeared because of the terrible monotony of our lives. We were just part of a mass, called *mukls*.² We were *mukls*—men destined for liquidation. Our brains had leaked from our heads. We were brain-dead. We didn't care for health, we didn't care for life. We were merely creatures destined for liquidation. We were not allowed to enquire about our fates, to speak about our lives, our futures. The only chance we had was when we went to the doctor. We would ask: "What's new? Any chance of change?" And the answer would be: "It's forever." The question was always: "What's new?" And the answer, always: "It's forever." After five or six years, we had no hope at all. We saw, with the little information we got from outside, that the West's attitude towards the Soviet Union was changing. There was no hope that World War III would start. At that stage we believed that only a new war could lead to our freedom. So we were not sure that we would ever leave prison; that we would survive. [Coetzee, Gilfillan, and Hulec 2002:128]

We might not have been privy to this touching description of the effects of intense trauma on human existence and experience, was it not for Mesicki's nostalgic reflections on the St. Nicholas Day events of 1951. His recalling of the sadness and complete sense of loss that he felt at that moment triggered

² *Mukl* is the acronym for the Czech *muz urceny k likvidaci*: a man destined for disposal.

within him one of the most touching accounts of the effects of intense trauma.

Everyday Precarity of Extreme Poverty

In a project on life in resource poor squatter areas—informal settlements—around Bloemfontein, in central South Africa, a group of women narrate how they are faced with a scourge of social ills resulting from poverty and unemployment (Masenya 2015). Both examples given below refer to sections during the interviews when these women were unable to contain their emotions. The suffering caused by extreme poverty is clearly depicted when they talk about their feelings. In both cases, the researcher experienced a tighter bond with the participants after their emotional outpourings. This bond—referred to earlier as a "social encounter"—opened the door for more sharing and disclosure by the participants.

Pinky³: It makes me feel bad seriously. That thing [not being able to find a permanent job] pains me so much—like at the end of every month, people buy things. They buy things for their children and I can't afford to. I also want to buy things for my children, but I can't because I do not have money. My children always tell me: "Mom, did you see that this person's parents bought him this and we don't have shoes and other stuff?" Do you understand how painful that is because I know that my children do not have those things and they want them, but I can't provide them. It hurts my feelings very much and I would take a walk to calm myself down. When I got back, only then would I be able to sit my children down and ask

³ Pseudonyms are used for all narrators from this point on.

them to accept the fact that I do not work so I do not have money.

Zoleka: I have brothers, but they are just useless. I buried my mom alone. I buried her all alone and they came holding their empty hands. The firstborn brother gave me R150.00 and what was I going to do with that money? And the other one contributed R900.00. They contributed such little money for their own mother's funeral! So, I gave them back their money. I buried my mother alone. I took her body from Bloemfontein and laid it to rest at my home [Lady Frere, Eastern Cape]. I did all that by myself. My brothers both live in Cape Town and are not working at all. I am alone. I might just as well be my mother's only child because I am not getting their help at all.

Overcoming the Divide: Young Black South Africans' Lived Experiences of Upward Mobility

The institutionalized racism that once subjugated the Black majority during South Africa's apartheid years gave way after 1994 to legislature that aims to bring the country into a new era of egalitarianism. A striking result of this has been the steady increase of young Black people achieving upward mobility and making the transition into the middle- and upper-classes. The research in this example explores the lived experiences of upward mobility of young Black newly qualified professionals such as lawyers, accountants, and medical doctors (cf. Kok, Coetzee, and Elliker 2017:56-73). As can be expected, the research often touches on this group's efforts to negotiate between separate and often contrasting identities: on the one side, being previously disadvantaged, growing up in poverty, and coming from the margin of the established society and—on the

other side—operating now among highly skilled colleagues, most of whom grew up within the privileged and protected realms of higher class and/or status groups.

Almost all of the upwardly mobile young professionals that form part of this project experience elements of continued prejudice and discrimination in their professional life. Being often reminded within present-day South Africa of previously existing inequalities, it remains difficult for them to express in an open and honest way the resentment that they experience. The deep-seated hurt caused by innuendos of inequality and their implied inferiority often resurfaces. Their new socio-economic status often requires them to show that they can conform to the old establishment's rules and expectations: that they are capable of performing well within their respective professional domains. As a result, most of the research participants had difficulty with narrating their upward trajectory. Only when the research participant could draw inspiration from the existential struggle in the process of her/his upward mobility, and the emotions involved in this struggle, was it possible to unleash an honest reflection on the personal journey. Piwe's story is an example in this regard. As a young medical doctor coming from a humble background his narrative only starts to flow well after he re-lived—in a somewhat humorous way—how he initially found his way to the institution of higher learning, the university, where he would complete the academic training required to qualify as a medical doctor. This account by Piwe not only contains references to the road that he had to follow in order to have come to the achievement of the required academic status. His account of this

journey also opened the way for his enthusiastic participation in the research.

Piwe: I came here with the train. I remember this: the first time I came to Bloemfontein, because I never travelled anywhere while I was still at home. So, I remember when I told my mother: "Listen, I'm gonna go to school, but I don't know." Because, you know, I didn't apply for "Medicine" [studying medical sciences at a Medical School] to start with. And remember the closing date is in May the previous year. So, I told my mom: "Listen, I'm going. I got good distinctions! So, let me go." She gave me R80. The train by then was 30 bucks. So, I took the train from Kroonstad and I got in here at the train station. Then I got off there [Bloemfontein Central Railway Station] and then I started asking around: "Where is the Varsity?" And they showed me the tower, the Cell C Tower there at the Waterfront. So, they just said: "Take this road." They showed me the Nelson Mandela Road. So, I walked to Varsity, looking at that tower. And they said: "When you get there, you will see on your right-hand side the Mall, Mimosa Mall, and then you know you are almost there. And then: just keep on looking on your left. You will see first Grey College and then the Varsity." And then, when I got to the Varsity, I wanted the Medical School. And the security guards, they took me to Kovsie Health [the on-campus Health Clinic at the University of the Free State]. And I sat there for hours and then the doctor came and said: "We're opening a file for you." And I'm like: "No! I want to register to become a student." And I had to go home to squat at another friend's place and come back the following day to just look for the Medical School. And once I found it, then everything became clear, you know.

And you can imagine when you get to Medical School and you know that you didn't apply, but you go with such confidence, you know? That: "Let me try." And if I didn't try, I wouldn't have been here today. Because they told me at first it's impossible. The Dean told me this is crazy, this is madness. Because I actually asked for the Head or the Principal. I didn't even know there were Deans there. So they took me to the Head of the School of Medicine, Professor Van Zyl. And I got there and I said: "Professor, I've come from so far. I brought my grade 12 certificate and what do you say, Professor? I want to study medicine." And he's like: "*Jisslike, Boet!*" [Loosely translated as: Oh my goodness, son!]. He took me to Mrs. Roussow, the administration woman, and she's trying to comfort me saying: "You passed well, but there's still some next time." And I started pouring out like: "If you know where I come from." And to see how God works: 2 days later they called me. The very same people who said it was impossible, they called me and said: "Listen, there are two students who cancelled, and we didn't consider the list. We actually considered you first." And they considered me. They called me in. I studied medicine. And here I am today.

The Sangoma or the Health-Care Center?

Health-Seeking Practices of Women

The subtitle of this section refers to the dilemma in developing and poor societies between adhering to traditional beliefs and practices on the one hand, and the utilization of modern medicine provided by the state and/or the private sector, on the other hand. The *sangoma* represents traditional health-care, performed by a healer without formally recognized training. Although usually more afford-

able to poor people and also more accessible in informal settlements, their “services” are not for free. Traditional healers operate outside of the confines of regulated and controlled tariffs and practices, and depend largely on the use of herbal medication and the application of forms of witchcraft. The desperation of poverty and the lack of means—financial, transport, informal area without medical facilities, et cetera—often leave the poor with no other option than to seek help from the traditional healer.

The dilemma expressed in the subtitle underlines the fact that health-care in South Africa is, even 25 years after the country’s democratization, still very unequal. Although health and well-being are seen as fundamental human rights, the reality is that people in resource-poor communities do not have access to good quality health-care. This project traces narratives related to health-care from a group of women living in abject poverty. It aims to document the health-seeking practices and medical decision-making that these women employ when faced with illness in their households (Mbelekani, Young-Hauser, and Coetzee 2017:210-227). All the women in this research talk about their dealing with illness in their homes against the background of their struggle for economic survival. The women come from a traditionally stoic cultural world, where emotions arising from illness and hardship are largely suppressed in daily interactions. The interviews clearly afforded them an opportunity to share without this customary constraint. When realizing that their emotional accounts on their day-to-day struggles were being listened to with empathy, they started to tell us in greater detail about

their trust in and use of traditional healers when confronting illness.

The following excerpt depicts a moment during data collection when one of the participant’s deeply emotional account of her despondency provides a turning point in her narrative. After sharing the suffering that she endured in her struggle with poverty, she seemingly finds it easier to talk about how she normally seeks medical care when she or a family member has to deal with illness:

Terry: ...when you are living, God gives you energy. Sometimes when I am trying to sleep, I would think: “What are we going to eat tomorrow? Oh, this maize meal is small!” But, you will see someone come in and give you money without you asking, and not knowing that you don’t have food. It is God. Sometimes you would see that you have maize meal, and you don’t even know how it got there. Sometimes a person brings you...you know. Sometimes you have nothing and you would see a person walk in carrying everything that you need and give it to you just like that. You will be shocked. How did the person know? What is that? It is God who sent the person. As people we live by God...Sometimes you even sleep without eating because it’s tough. You have no money, you have nothing.

Oh, it was painful! Oh, it was painful! Even when they took photos of us, these children surrounding me, we were crying. Jo! It was painful, my child! [Wiping tears from her face]...The most painful thing was thinking where I am going to get what from where and from whom. I don’t know because I live on the money I get from the social grant [crying]

and these children are still at school [wiping tears from her face]...

Yes! It's taking me back. The pain is coming back again. My heart is painful, you know. To ask for a place to sleep. And another thing that also pains me is that my ancestors are there. And God is there...

Marginality and Oppression: Narratives of Belonging from a Transforming South Africa

Situated in the sociology of everyday life, this last example of the role of sharing deeply emotional experiences during in-depth interviews comes from 2 farm workers. The project focuses on the lifestories of two elderly research participants—one set of interviews conducted 10 years, and the other set 20 years after South Africa's democracy of 1994 (Coetzee and Rau 2017). These 2 participants were born on two separate farms. Having spent their entire lives on these farms where they were born, Abraham and Henry reflect on their past and on their position in the “new” South Africa. Both opened up in terms of what they regard as their “identity,” as well as on their views of the place and space where they have been living. They shared their religious beliefs and told us how religion constitutes a way in which they negotiate everyday life and ameliorate suffering. Our lengthy meetings with Abraham took place during 2004/2005—one decade after South Africa's democracy—and those with Henry during 2014—two decades after the political transition. We are convinced that the two research participants would not have opened their hearts to the same extent if it was not for the opportunities during the interview sessions to talk freely—often emotionally—about their personal experiences of be-

reavement, addiction, anger, and frustration. Having been given the opportunity to speak about traumatic events during the course of their personal lives provided openness for these elderly participants to talk about strong traces of continued suppression and suffering. They relate their feelings about subordination in the workplace and on being members of a largely disenfranchised group—even though South Africa's democracy came a decade or 2 earlier.

Abraham: Yes, Mister, actually. But, as I look at my case, I see: we continue like this. If the Lord made us in such a way that we were all the same height, nobody would have wanted to work under someone else. And no one would have helped anyone else. Now the Lord has to change this matter in this way. So, if I can, I must now help. Now I have to help my master so that he can get ahead—like working with the sheep and those things. Now if we were all the same height, something like this wouldn't work. Now the Lord knew well, he had good knowledge.

There has to be [a system of] let me do the work. And I also say so: I agree one hundred percent. There has to be. Let me do the work. Then it can...then it works. Each one feels...I feel: it is good that the Lord made it available.

Henry: I still call [the boss] Master and *Seur* [the boss's father and original boss] and *Miesies* [the boss's wife]. Yes, we did say Master [*Baas*] and Great Master [*Grootbaas*] and Small Master [*Kleinbaas*]. That we heard from our parents. I think [we speak to them in this manner] because of the suffering. You had to call the White owner *Seur* because he was the highest. Then you had a foreman, Master [*Baas*], a White fore-

man. I also had to say to him *Baas, Baas Sarel*. But, for the owner of the farm it was *Seur*.

Yes, we felt that we were going backwards and the man was going forward. But, you worked just for free. It did bother people. But, people were afraid... Where would you find a new Master? If I went to another farm, that farmer would phone my previous Master and would ask him: "What kind of a boy was he?" Then the previous master would say: "No, he was such a boy or he was such a boy." Then the farmer would come back and say: "No, man, I did look for a man, but I found one." Then you had to go and try to get another Master...And you would go along until one day when you would maybe find a Master.

Conclusion

From the examples given above it is clear that deeper qualitative understanding can potentially be reached when narratives reveal exceptional moments and deeply personal meanings. When narratives unwrap elements of the exceptional we stand the chance of gaining greater insight and understanding—elements that might enable us to guide the interview towards deeper explorations of the research participants' experiences. In all the examples in this article, the research participants reach emotional moments following which they open up and reveal personal experiences. These experiences range from hopelessness, panic, and anxiety—as is the case of the long-term political prisoner whose life lost its meaning—to desperation, fatigue, and fear that accompany life in extreme poverty and desolation.

It is unlikely that research on traumatic and sensitive issues such as the profound experiences of long-term political incarceration, a life in abject poverty, the challenges of negotiating the pitfalls of newly acquired socio-economic status, and the confines of structural inequality can bring us to deeper levels of understanding without tapping into the revealing potential of negotiating a personal social encounter between researcher and research participant. In all of the above cases the emotional narratives reflect personal experiences. At the same time they open a door to our understanding of structural impediments in moving towards a better society.

The narrative study of lives—when conducted in a sympathetic manner and when allowing space for emotional meaning-making—has the potential to contribute to increased democratization in a country where the numerical majority of the population was previously excluded from political participation and where their voices were silent. The effect of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the South African society in as far as its contribution to a democratization of knowledge on and about the powerless confirms this potential. A further effect of the TRC is that it also sensitized people to strive towards a better understanding of their own social reality so that they can work towards a better society. For the qualitative researcher, *the narrative study of lives* can contribute to a more focused search for understanding the social realities of a wide spectrum of society. This search can and will contribute to the development of an ear more finely-tuned to the personal—and often emotional—experiences of research participants.

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Pride in Teachers' Everyday Work. Conditions and Contexts

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Abstract The aim of this article is to elaborate on the reasons behind feeling the emotion of pride within the professional context of actions undertaken by contemporary Polish teachers. The article attempts to answer the question of what role pride plays in teachers' career building process and their daily work. All considerations focus on the social construction of the meaning of pride, established from teachers' perspectives. Pride is here referred to as social emotion, in line with an interpretivist approach. The following reflections are based on the data collected due to: 1) multiple observations conducted by the author in the years 2008-2016 in the primary, as well as junior high schools; 2) interviews with teachers, parents, and other school staff. Pride in teachers' work arises in three main contexts: 1) pride due to prestige, 2) pride due to one's recognition (appreciation), and 3) pride as a result of diverse interactions, for example, teacher-student. The emotion at hand is, like shame, of a social origin and plays a key role when it comes to interactions, social control, as well as maintaining social order. And yet, most of the researchers would give the lead to emotions such as shame, guilt, or related stigma. Based on the collected data, this article focuses on the emotion of pride in the process of identity building by employees—teachers.

Keywords Emotions; Pride; Power; Status; Self-Esteem; Teachers; Ethnography; Poland

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The aim of the article is to show the reasons behind feeling pride associated with professional activities undertaken by contemporary Polish teachers. I believe that frequently experienced pride leads to an increase in self-esteem and satisfaction with one's work. What, in turn, empowers an individual, as well as strengthens one's belief about their abilities, potency, and power. Thus, people start to believe that more and more things depend upon their acting, and that the actions they undertake will be successful. A self-constructed image of oneself (even a short-lived one) creates a belief in the growth of the self-status (see: Kemper 1978; 1989; 2005) and the growth of their own authority (the level of power in Theodore Kemper's concept). The article answers the question of what role does pride play in the process of building a teacher's career and in their everyday work. By focusing on the reasons behind, as well as the implications of experiencing pride, we can observe, on the one hand, how it arises, and, on the other, how important it is for the teachers.

All reflections presented here focus on the social construction of the meaning of pride—from teachers' perspectives—and are based on ethnographic research conducted in Poland.¹ It should be noted

¹ Information about the Polish education system can be found, among others, at: www.eurydice.org.pl/system-edukacji-w-polsce/. There are brochures in English presenting the specifics of the Polish education system from 2006 to 2018. Reports are published every two years.

At this point it should be noted that the article presents the results of research on the functioning in Poland of a three-tier education system covering elementary school, junior high school, and high school.

The education system in Poland is constantly changing. Until 1999, there was a mandatory eight-grade elementary school in Poland, in which children aged 7-14 were studying. After completing their primary education, the student was able to continue studying in a 3-year vocational school, in a 5-year technical secondary school, or in a 4-year general high school. An important reform took place in 1999, based on which a three-level

that the professional group at hand should be seen in terms of a background allowing for reflection on the emotion of pride and its impact on employees' (in general) activities. Contemporary teachers, acting and interacting in a constantly changing environment, had to develop specific mechanisms allowing them to feel contentment and job satisfaction—in order to function effectively within their professional context, and—more precisely—in the classroom. In today's Polish school, an effective motivation system for teachers practically does not exist. Thus, experienced emotions, including pride, can be seen as playing an important role in the process of motivating. Pride, as one of the most important social emotions (see: Kemper 1978; 2005; Lewis 1992; 2005; Scheff 1988; 1990; 1997; 2000; Lea and Webley 1997), significantly affects both the behavior, as well as work of teachers, contributing to satisfaction and efficiency growth.

Emotions are biologically and physiologically aroused, but mainly culturally shaped in the process of everyday interactions in one's social environment (Averill 1991; Lazarus 1991). They are socially modified in accordance with certain norms and values accepted and specific to a given culture

system of mandatory school education was introduced (elementary school, junior high school, high school). There was a six-year primary school, which in 2014-2016 was to be started by children aged 7 or 6 (due to another reform). Then there was a 3-year junior high school, after which the student was to choose between a 3-year general high school and a 4-year technical high school. Vocational education was almost completely abolished, although some schools "survived," offering the course of 2 or 3 years of vocational training. After 18 years, the Polish education system has undergone another very significant reform. In 2017, junior high schools were liquidated, and the system again based on the assumption from before 1999. The last students left the walls of junior high schools in June 2019. Currently, there is an 8-year primary school for 7-year-olds and, next, 4- or 5-year high school (high schools and technical schools) and 3-year vocational schools.

(see: Shott 1979). Thus, emotions will be defined here as “adjustment processes that allow for adaptation and influence the course of the communication process, establishing, sustaining, changing, or interrupting the relationships between the individual and the environment, which are triggered when a person encounters external or internal stimuli that are important for their organism or personality” (Pawłowska 2013:8 [translation—BP]; see: Campos et al. 1994). Emotional reactions are understood based on accepted and recognizable cultural scripts. “The expression of that feeling is moderated by cultural prescriptions” (Wisecup, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2006:106). This “placement of a person on a social ground determines which emotions will be expressed at a specific time and place, on what grounds, and for what reason, by what means of expression and by whom” (Kemper 2005:73; also see: Kemper 1991). I believe that emotions, widely recognized as subjective states experienced by the individual, should be reconstructed in relation to social activities and processes in which the actor is involved.

For the following considerations, the concepts of feeling, perceiving, and shaping interactions based on pride were of utmost importance. The theoretical frame of the paper is based on the concepts of: Susan Shott (1979), who argues that expressing emotions is determined by cultural norms and rules, and emotional self-control is a kind of social control; Thomas Scheff (1988; 1990; 1997; 2000; 2003) and Thomas Scheff and Suzanne Retzinger (1991), where pride and shame are seen as providing social regulation of behavior without any need for external supervision; Michael Lewis (1992; 2000;

2005), who developed a model explaining self-conscious emotions from two variables—the positive or negative evaluation of one’s behavior; it includes emotions of pride, feelings of guilt/grief, hubris, and shame; and Theodore Kemper (1978; 1987; 1991; 2005; 2008), where emotions are captivated in social relations in the dimensions of power and status, where pride is the result of satisfaction and growth of social status.

Pride: Definitional Considerations

Pride is a positive emotion that makes individuals attune themselves to their mutual reactions (assuming the role of the other) (see: Turner and Stets 2009:174). Pride is a signal of an intact social bond between interaction partners. It is a secondary emotion superimposed on positive emotions and is part of the “family of emotions of contentment” (Goleman 1997). The arousal of pride depends on the quality of social relations. In theory, pride most often appears together with the emotion of shame (e.g., E. Goffman, T. Scheff, S. Retzinger), or alongside shame and guilt (e.g., M. Lewis, T. Kemper, T. Scheff). The literature on pride is scattered, and, in different places, pride has been defined and described in a number of diverse ways (see: Lea and Webley 1997:325). Most commonly, pride is simply regarded as an emotion, sometimes qualified as an intellectual emotion (e.g., Averill 1991) or a secondary emotion (Plutchik 1962; 1991; Kemper 1987; 1991), and it is usually thought of as one of the positive emotions (e.g., Lawler 1992). Pride has also been described as an attitude and characterized as an expression of self-esteem and a motivation or drive.

Believing that pride is a social emotion, I leave aside considerations regarding the neurotic nature of pride² and those referring to true and false pride.³

In Thomas Scheff's concept (e.g., 1990; 1997; 2000; 2003), emotions are an element of the looking-glass-self and the basis for social control. Pride takes the central place next to embarrassment and shame. It emerges when we observe social norms. And since we strive to feel positive emotions, such as pride, people tend to "go with the flow" (as is the case of social conformity). Thus, one's aspiration to experience positive emotions may result in a high level of social stability. For that reason, pride (and shame) provides social regulation of behavior without the need for external supervision (see: Scheff 1990).

In the cognitive-attribution theory of Michael Lewis (1992; 2005), pride, together with hubris, shame, and guilt, depends on the individual's self-awareness. A person experiencing pride focuses on specific behavior, not on the whole self. They evaluate their action (behavior) in terms of a success.

² Karen Horney (1950; 1982) describes a process through which individuals deal with inner conflicts by a compulsive search for glory, exaggerated expectations, and inner unity. The pride of another person has been dealt with from a psychoanalytic standpoint (Rosenblatt 1988). Wilder (1978) suggests that pride is identical to the need for self-deification and is not the same as healthy self-esteem.

³ Stephen Lea and Paul Webley (1997:328) observe that "Proper pride is pride in genuine achievements (or genuine good qualities) that are genuinely one's own. False pride is pride in what is not an achievement, or not admirable, or does not properly belong to oneself. Proper pride is associated with the desirable property of self-esteem; false pride with vanity or conceit. Proper pride is associated with persistence, endurance, and doggedness; false pride with stubbornness, obstinacy, and pig-headedness. False pride thus follows from an inaccurate perception of one's own achievements, or of one's own responsibility for them."

For Susan Shott (1979), pride is a persistent emotion, focused on self-approval, motivating a person to experience it more. By behaving in a socially expected way, we ensure the approval of others, which, in turn, leads not only to the arousal of pride, but also of group solidarity.

Theodore Kemper (1978; 1987; 1991; 2005; 2008) assumes that any changes in social relations can be understood as mutual changes in power (authority) and status (prestige) of actors towards themselves (see: Kemper 2008:128). The pride in Kemper's concept is the effect of satisfaction emerging as a result of the increase in one's status and/or power, which, in our opinion, we deserve due to our or other people's actions (Pawłowska 2013:198). It should, however, be remembered that the way power and status, as well as, consequently, the emergence of specific relationships and emotions are perceived depends on several factors, such as culture specificity, which determines the individual level of power and status, and its definition, social position, and specificity of social organizations, which can set different patterns of emotional behavior by assigning a different status to them (see: Pawłowska 2014).

As observed by Lisa Williams and David DeSteno (2008:1007), who referred to Kemper's concept, pride can be defined as a unique positive emotion capable of stimulating efforts aimed at developing difficult skills and reaching high status (cf. Kemper 1978; 2005; Webster et al. 2003; Tracy and Robins 2004a; 2004b). Pride, as impacting on self-image, self-esteem, and self-consistency, is a mechanism that ensures one's consistency and helps to make good long-term decisions (Lea and Webley 1997:336).

The primary function of emotions is to initiate and guide goal-directed behavior (Frijda 1986; Barrett and Campos 1987; Cosmides and Tooby 2000).

Pride and shame are social emotions that play a fundamental role in shaping social interactions, in the process of social control, serving to maintain social order. However, most authors focus on emotions of shame, guilt, and stigma. This article indicates the importance of the emotion of pride in the process of creating the identity of an employee (teachers). I believe that pride—as an emotion that maintains social interactions and aids to create new ones—significantly affects the building of positive interpersonal relationships, including positive relationships within the workplace context. In contrast to shame, pride is a positive emotion that builds social order (see: Shott 1979). An individual who feels shame can affect interactions by taking actions that are immoral or unethical. Such social actors may reach for manipulation, cheating, or lies (see: Ekman 1985). They may try to protect their selves by suppressing shame or bypassing it (see: Lewis 1972; Scheff 1990; 1997; 2000; 2003; Konecki 2014). Such activities are to prevent a loss of face (Goffman 1967; 2006) or serve in building of an image that one believes is consistent with the expectations others (may) have. A person feeling pride does not need to play such “games,” or, at least, may be doing so with lesser frequency (see, e.g., Ekman 1985). Building one’s self-esteem at a satisfactory level allows for a positive assessment of one’s self; a person satisfied with one’s self-image is less prone to using manipulation techniques, including self-promotion. Thus, instead of being involved in self-defense, their mental energy can be channeled to other activities, including

maintaining satisfying social bonds. In fact, it was the study of the mechanisms behind higher satisfaction and motivation to work that led me to pay closer attention to pride as an emotion conditioning cooperation and social interaction based on the mutual trust of interactional partners. I believe that the researchers devote too little attention to the emotion of pride, especially if we consider that the ability to arouse pride in individuals can contribute to the duration of social order and the increase in employees’ efficiency.

Methodology and Data

All the ideas contained in this article are based on my research on emotions felt in relation to professional work, which I have carried out for a recent few years in Polish educational institutions (schools as teachers’ workplace). In order to deepen the insight into the examined reality, the number of cases was reduced to three primary and two junior high schools (see: Burawoy 1998). Due to the specificity of ethnographic study, the school turned out to be a relatively closed system to which access “requires permission which, if granted, will take some time in obtaining” (Stein 2006:70). Considering the sensitivity of students’ data, school principals were often reluctant to grant my access to the field. Some principals and teachers claimed that the researcher’s “permanent” presence in the educational facility will disrupt the functioning of the school, thereby refusing my access to data. Instead, I was suggested to leave a questionnaire to be completed by teachers—in order to minimize the researcher’s contact with a given school. Thus, the choice of schools for the study was dictated by my access to data (see:

Silverman 2007). I had to take advantage of my informal contacts and connections (Konecki 2000:171; also see: Konecki 1998), and the number of schools was limited to five.

The ethnographic research I have constructed, based on diverse case studies (see: Prus 1997; Deegan 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), was designed in line with organizational ethnography, allowing the understanding of the perspective of the organization participants and to study both little known, as well as unusual areas of better known phenomena (Kostera 2012:73; also see: Kostera 2003:12; 2011:9).

The research was based on ethnographic study using triangulation, which allows a researcher to undertake different points of view and thus—reach a distance to the analyzed data (Hammersley and Atkinson 2000). The study used data triangulation, methodological triangulation, and theoretical triangulation (see: Denzin 1978; Konecki 2000:86).

I conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews and a series of observations of school life and work (cooperation) of teachers—with school staff, as well as students' parents. During the observations, I conducted informal conversations, so-called conversational interviews (Konecki 2000) with school principals, teachers, other school employees, and parents. I also analyzed existing materials, such as school statutes, regulations, legal regulations, school operating program, staff meeting protocols, school development plans, teachers' Level of Professional Promotion⁴ documents, websites, and the like.

⁴ See footnote 6 in this article.

Observation is the main research technique in ethnography. This was also the case of the study described in this article. Thusly collected data were supplemented with information gained in the course of interviews and the analysis of existing materials. It should be noted that ethnography allows for the collection of empirical data in everyday contexts in which the phenomena occur (see: Prus 1997:192; Deegan 2001; Kostera 2003:12; 2011:9; 2012:73; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

The observations of teachers' work were of participant and non-participant nature. They were carried out in 2008-2016 at primary and junior high schools from the Lodz agglomeration. If possible, I wanted to participate in all kinds of events taking place in school life, that is, classes, extracurricular activities (remedial classes, activity clubs), breaks between lessons, after-school clubs' activities, school academies, teacher-parents meetings, parents-School Board meetings (Parents' Committee), and teachers' meetings.

One of the advantages of observations is that a researcher has a chance to capture the context of certain phenomena or interactional episodes, and thus—to reconstruct the elements of the analyzed process that could have not been available if collected due to the use of other research techniques and tools (see: Adler and Adler 1987; Konecki 2000; Wojciechowska 2018). To this end, an observation journal was kept, which, as David Silverman (2007) notes, provides space for distinguishing between *emic* and *etic* analysis. A very important element of the observations I conducted were informal conversations with parents (at least before and/or after meetings with teachers, while they were waiting to pick up their

children [legal guardians and those entitled by them can wait for children on the premises of a given school]), teachers, janitorial and administrative staff (during breaks), students (e.g., during breaks and homerooms), and school principals (at least before and/or after school celebrations, meetings).

In the interviews, I attempted to draw attention to important elements of teachers' work, with particular emphasis on "easy" and "difficult," pleasant and unpleasant, positive and negative situations. In total, 93 interviews were conducted—42 interviews with active teachers, including school principals, 18 interviews with retired teachers, 19 with students' parents, and 14 with administrative staff. The average duration of one interview was 39 minutes; however, some interviews, especially those with retired teachers, were much longer (over 2 hours). Interviews with active teachers were conducted both with those working in schools where the ethnographic study was applied, as well as those teaching in other schools. It is worth noting here that after our first interview—initiated by me—some of the interviewees contacted me again—offering to be interviewed—on their request—one more time. Such instances were due to gaining the informants' trust in the course of letting them to get to know me better. Among other things, such behavior of the informants allowed for a comparison of the data obtained at different stages of the research, as well as shed some light on the specificity of the field (see: Becker and Greer 1960; Silverman 2007).

In the first phase of conducting interviews with active teachers and school principals I had a feel-

ing that all I heard were some empty slogans. They were providing information, which, in their opinion, should be conveyed. Still, it did not, for the most part, reflect how they felt. For example, when the informants talked about the role of the teacher, I would hear, in the first part of the interview, that "school is a pedagogic and educational institution, and the task of the teacher is to prepare children, young people to function in society as best as possible." In the next statements, the educational function of the school was clearly pointed out, marginalizing the pedagogic (rearing, bringing up younger students) one. It was emphasized that the main task of the school was to prepare children to pass an exam with a good grade, allowing them to successfully finish a given stage of education. However, the school tasks were often equated with individual teacher's tasks. Thus, it can be assumed that the area at hand is negotiated within one's professional context—through participation in the school community. What is more, informants alternately used "I" and "we" (school). The school goals were also the individual goals of the employee:

My goal is, first and foremost, to prepare the student for the exam. Those three years of work in some way prepare them for the end of school. [a man, junior high school teacher, aged 48]

Teachers are not for raising and do not raise children... parents should bring them up...At school, the student is supposed to acquire knowledge. [a woman, junior high school teacher, aged 31]

I have to implement the program. This is the most important. [a man, junior high school teacher, aged 45]

After getting to know the informants, and vice versa, the interviews were more in-depth. They were conducted in places and on occasions convenient for the interviewees. Most often it was the informant or researcher's place of residence, a coffee house, teachers' lounge, or the principal's office. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed based on the principles of grounded theory methodology. The application of grounded theory methodology is consistent with the adaptation of interpretative paradigm and allowed to capture the processual dimension of constructing and giving meanings to studied phenomena, by comparing different cases in order to select from the collected material basic concepts that constituted the basis for further comparisons (see: Konecki 2000). The following grounded theory methodology procedures were used: substantial coding, including open coding, theoretical coding, memo-writing, diagramming. Based on the constant comparative method, categories, their properties, and dimensions, have been reconstructed, including experiencing the emotion of pride.

The Reasons behind Experiencing Pride in Teachers' Work

During the interviews, the informants eagerly shared situations in which the emotion of pride appeared. Very often in the narrative, the feeling of pride was mentioned. However, in most of the cases, pride was deduced from the informants' statements. The interlocutors sometimes spoke about happiness, contentment, joy, and satisfaction. It is a group of emotions related to pride (see: Plutchik 1962; 1980; 1994; Ekman 1972). One can assume that each of those feelings is accom-

panied by pride. Whenever there was a narrative related to the emotion of pride, information about an increase in job satisfaction appeared. It should therefore be recognized that the feeling of pride is an emotion directly affecting the growth of motivation to act (see: Atkinson 1974; Herzberg 1976; Weiner 1985). The feeling of pride leads to the emergence of job satisfaction, what results in an increased motivation and individual's aspiration to achieve success.

Pride is a response to the individual's success, including the increase in the level of power and/or status, but is also the driving force behind the actions taken, contributing to the success of a teacher. Thusly, pride became one of the core categories of the research presented here.

In the research, the emotion of pride appeared in three main contexts. The first one—macro (structural)—is associated with pride in belonging to an organization and/or professional group. The second—mezzo (evaluation)—refers to one's achievements and measurable successes appearing in the teacher's work. It is connected with satisfying the need for recognition and respect. The third—micro (interactional)—is related to the teacher-student relationship. It refers to the level of the student's actual work, their commitment, and to the teacher's authority, understood as having power with the simultaneous high self-status.

Pride as a Result of Prestige

The first category dimension I have identified as a macro (structural) context is related to pride in

belonging to an organization and/or professional group. It also includes a positive attitude of the teacher working with children. Informants simply indicated pride or satisfaction of **working as a teacher**, and the resulting prestige. As a profession, a teacher enjoys great social respect. Since a couple of years, in the Polish ranking of prestige of occupation, this profession is on the seventh place (Cybulska 2013; Omyła-Rudzka 2019). Belonging to a given professional group (teachers) affects the increase in the self-status, which increases self-esteem and may lead to the growth of actual or idealized authority in the image of the self.

...when I started working, I felt really good. I remember how proud I was that I got this job. My mother was also very proud of me. She used to be a teacher, so I was growing up in the atmosphere that a teacher is the authority providing good education and carrying out this education duty. [a woman, junior high school teacher, aged 53]

The prestige of the organization is also important. Pride arises as a result of **working at school** as an educational institution in general. Teachers indicate the nature of the work, working hours, longer holidays, and their relative freedom in the way the lessons are conducted. An important factor behind the prestige of an organization is the fact of **working in a specific school**, recognized in the educational environment as “better” and placed higher in various types of school rankings:

I’m glad that I work at this school. We are the best junior high school in Lodz. [a woman, junior high school teacher, aged 43]

The last condition included in the macro (structural) context is pride which is the result of belonging to organizations recognized as elite and operating in educational institutions. Such organizations gather a specific group of “the best” teachers. Institutional elitism can affect the perception of one’s self by raising or maintaining high self-esteem of individuals. This dimension unambiguously connects with the self-evaluation and is related to successive conditions, included in the mezzo (evaluation) context.

Pride as a Result of Recognition

The second dimension is related to defining success as **measurable achievements**, awards, distinctions, and praise received by teachers in their professional work:

I must tell you immodestly that I have been awarded the Silver and Golden Cross of Merit for my pedagogical and social work. I received several regional distinctions, whose names I cannot remember at the moment, and the prestigious Minister of Education Award. [a woman, retired teacher, aged 84]

This dimension is associated with a positive assessment of one’s actions and defining them in terms of success, which is also considered as a **lack of routine in conducting classes**, studying for a postgraduate degree (for personal development and in order to be promoted), or creative approach to solving problems arising in the teacher’s work:

I am proud of my achievements. I conducted many demonstration lessons.⁵ At that time, I was the best

⁵ A demonstration lesson—a kind of peer lesson conducted by a teacher and observed by teachers and principals of other

teacher in Lodz. I belonged to the elite Club of Creative Teachers. I received many awards from the Education Superintendent, and even the first-level award of the Minister of Education. Each award stimulated me to work even harder, so I wanted to sit up late at nights and prepare teaching aids. Each class was different. I never fell into a routine. I also consider it a success. [a woman, retired teacher, aged 67]

Measurable achievements and one's successes are related to **satisfying the need for recognition and respect**. Recognition, understood as striving to gain a position and respect in the eyes of others (Maslow 1964; 1990), is related to the self-status. Teachers, as any workers, wish to feel that they are doing something important, which meets the recognition of the environment, translates into a positive self-image, and increases self-esteem. Recognition is strengthened when praise is public. One of the teachers told me about a situation in which she was publicly praised, after a demonstration lesson she conducted for a group of principals, inspectors, and teachers from other schools. The praise at hand was pronounced by the principal of another educational institution. The event caused her great satisfaction and pride. The fragment of her narration presented below clearly shows that her self-esteem and motivation to work have increased:

educational institutions (other schools), as well as the representatives of the Board of Education and Pedagogy (a body supervising the work of teachers) called inspectors. Conducting a demonstration lesson is a great distinction for a teacher and is associated with great prestige. Usually, such lessons are provided by the best teachers who have great achievements in working with children and young people. Offering a teacher to conduct such a lesson involves expressing appreciation and is a source of satisfaction and pride. It should be noted that conducting a demonstration lesson does not involve any additional financial gratification.

...one of the principals said: "Oh, I would like to have the same mathematician in my school." Then I felt yyy I felt that I could be really accepted. The fact that your boss looks at you in a different way is another matter. He sees you every day, knows your mistakes, and knows your qualities. It's different. And somebody comes from the outside and sees you in action; sees you during work, only at work, and you can show yourself in such a way that another principal would like to work with a teacher like you. It was nice to me, it was nice...Then I believed that what I do, that style of teaching, is so good. And I thought—I do want to work as a teacher. Then I felt appreciated. [a woman, junior high school teacher, aged 46]

The whole event allowed her to create, strengthen, and maintain a positive image of herself within her professional context. According to Leon Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparisons, people have a need to judge others to get an accurate image of themselves. Using the objective criteria (rewards, praise), the teacher assessed her own abilities and strengths. She made a comparison to other mathematicians. She assumed that if the praising principal wanted to have a teacher like her in his school, mathematicians working in that other institution must have been worse than she was. There has also been an increase in status (prestige) in line with Kemper's concept discussed above and an increase in self-esteem referring to the concept of Lea and Webley.

Pride also appears as **the effect of interactions with colleagues and co-workers** and **as the result of the reaction to promotion**. Here, I do not mean the promotion associated with changing the post (e.g.,

promotion to be appointed a principal of an educational institution), but one's professional promotion related to achieving the next "Level of Professional Promotion."⁶ Those two sources of pride are closely linked. Achieving the next level in the educational hierarchy can be seen as an expression of appreciation from others (authorities) and translates into a sense of personal satisfaction, happiness, and re-increases self-esteem.

Pride as a Result of the Teacher-Student Relationship

The third dimension discussed is the micro (interactional) context. It has been called thusly because of the nature of the activities undertaken (or not) by the teacher, the student, and (at times) the parent. In my opinion, the most interesting, and, at the same time, the most clearly indicated by the interlocutors, source of the described emotion is the arousal of pride due to **the achievements of other people (students)** the individual (teacher) had an influence on, directly or indirectly. Therefore, the feeling of pride is indirectly based on the success of others (e.g., a parent is proud of the achievements of their children). Rosenblatt (1988) sees pride in another person's achievements as a result of identifying with the other, which, in turn, can be seen as a specific defense mechanism against the destructive emotion of envy. The informants

⁶ The Polish legislator defined the possibilities of teachers' promotion on a four-level scale. The career begins with 1) the intern's degree. After one year of work and after obtaining a positive exam grade, one can obtain grade 2) of a contract teacher. After the next three years and submitting the documents needed to conduct the qualifying exam, the teacher can become 3) an appointed teacher. The final stage is to obtain the degree 4) of a qualified teacher.

acknowledged the success of their students as their own, and thus they felt proud about it. They did not pay too much attention to other factors that could have contributed to the students' success. Instead, they believed that their own work, their contribution to teaching was so significant that the student achieved good results in contests, competitions, and science Olympiads. The student's success is understood as **the effect of the teacher's work with the student**.

Of course, one can easily point out many other factors that could have affected the student's results. Such factors would include the student's independent work, independent acquisition and broadening of knowledge in a given field, the parents' work with the student, participation in additional enterprises such as activity clubs supervised by other teachers, or private lessons.⁷ During private lessons the student acquires (deepens) knowledge, working with another teacher. It sometimes happens that it is the tutor who prepares the student to participate in the subject competition, or Olympiad:

⁷ Private lessons are classes offered to students by a teacher of a given student and/or their parents' choice. Most often, such lessons are provided by teachers from a school other than the one the student attends. They take place during extra-curricular hours (most often late afternoon hours or at weekends), at the tutor or the student's place of residence. Such lessons are additionally payable, settled up by the student's parents. It happens that a student attends private lessons in several subjects. The subjects of the most commonly provided tutoring are mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Additional language classes are standard. Pupils of all levels of education attend private lessons, though this phenomenon is intensified in older classes. It is particularly noticeable in secondary schools, among students of the final year. Private lessons are attended by both students with educational problems and those who are very good and achieve successes in competitions and Olympiads. In the Polish educational reality, tutoring is a fairly common and ubiquitous phenomenon.

My son is a laureate of the Olympiad in chemistry. For two years, he has been going to such a nice lady who prepared him for the Olympiad. The point was that he could choose any high school. At school, they would not have prepared him.⁸ [a parent]

Despite parents' statements, who repeatedly pointed to students' independent work at home or during private lessons, the teachers directly linked their students' achievements with their work. The teachers were thus "hooking up" to their students' successes. That may be due to the fact that teachers' work is not really measurable. It is difficult to objectively assess which teacher teaches better. A grade given to a student by a teacher is also not measurable. Students without hesitation are able to indicate teachers who have very high requirements and it is a great success to get a good grade (4) at their lessons. Obviously, they can also recognize those teachers who grant excellent grades (6) without students' special effort.⁹ Not always that teacher who students like more than others is also the one who imparts knowledge better. The measurable criterion is also not the results of subsequent exams, since, as indicated above, it will not always be the effect of working with one teacher only. One of the ideas of the Ministry of Education to enable the ranking of schools and the assessment of the teacher's work was to create an indicator of stu-

dent knowledge growth, so-called "educational added value" (Value-Added Indicators [VAI]).¹⁰ Children starting education at a given level (primary school, junior high school, high school, etc.) undergo a series of tests to assess their level of knowledge at the entry. Then another competence test (exam) is written by the children leaving the school. The results are compared and the VAI is obtained. The higher the indicator, the better a given school and its teachers are. And, again, one should not forget about several important intervening conditions that may affect and disturb the indicator. In addition to the above-mentioned factors (students' interests, parental work, attending private lessons), students' success is influenced by issues such as their educational environment, fashion among students for learning or not learning, and higher knowledge than other pupils at the entrance. In the latter case, the growth of knowledge may be, in fact, smaller, despite the high level of teaching and the teacher's significant contribution to the education process. That means that schools recruiting better students can get a lower level of VAI. A student who obtained the threshold of 90%-100% at preliminary tests has little possibility to achieve an even better result, and that significantly disturbs the VAI. Teachers share the view of the unfounded use of such indicators and the amount of VAI points does not affect their motivation to work:

A teacher's work is connected with experiencing various emotions—from joy, when I can teach someone

⁸ In Poland, there are regulations governing the admission of a student to secondary school. Students who are laureates or finalists of the nationwide subject Olympiad and winners of a subject contest of provincial or national range are admitted in the first place to a public upper secondary school, if they meet the condition of graduating from junior high school (certificate of completion) and submit a certificate stating the possession of the title (Act on the Education System, Polish Journal of Laws of 2015, as amended, article 20d).

⁹ There is a six-grade rating scale in Poland. The best grade is excellent (6), and the worst is unsatisfactory (1).

¹⁰ In the English-language literature, Value-Added Indicators stand for "educational added value." Readers interested in this issue are referred to the subject literature and OECD studies and reports on the state of education issued by Educational Research Institutes (see, e.g., Meyer 1997; Schagen and Hutchinson 2003; Dolata 2007; OECD 2008).

something, to frustration, when it turns out that the effort put into the education of a class or a specific person does not actually bring results. This work is primarily characterized by the fact that we must be pleased with the small success of our own students, that is huge for them, but, let's say, when it comes to brutal school statistics and, for example, VAI, yes, that is the school quality assessment system, it will be low, but the teacher is happy that their student gets 55% instead of 30% on the exam. In the scale of Poland or Lodz, that is not a great result, but, for a specific child, it is very good. Also, emotions are really related to work. [a woman, junior high school teacher, aged 44]

Having a student(s) winning contests, competitions, and Olympiads revealed a hubris referring to the entire self (Lewis 2005). At the same time, hubris was more clearly visible in relation to school as a whole institution, and not exclusively to the teacher. The principals used phrases such as “we are the best,” “our school won,” “the student of our school is the winner of the competition.” **“Bragging about students”** is a ritual. The names of the best students appear on school websites and on boards hung on the walls of hallways or classes. Such students become not only the glory of the teacher of a given subject, but also of the homeroom teacher, and of other school teachers. “Bragging about students” is a category that refers to the reason and effect of pride. The arousal of pride and experiencing it by other teachers and the principal can be evidenced as the emotional chain (Collins 1975; 1981; 1990; 2004), emotional contagion (Haffield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1994; Doherty 1997), and confirmation of the assumption that people cooperating with each other share emotions and moods (Bartel and Saavedra

2000). Teachers talk about the competition winners in the teachers' lounge. It can influence an increase in satisfaction with belonging to a given school community. One student (a winner) can provide pride experienced by all school workers. In such sense, emotions can be seen as a community-based product (Prus 2013:11); in this case—a school community. The emotion of pride is “spread” among the student, teacher of the subject in which the student succeeded during a competition or Olympiad, then the homeroom teacher, who may teach a different subject than the one in which the student succeeded externally, the school principal, and finally—all other school employees, which influences their pride of working in that particular school. Thus, the success of one student increases the work satisfaction, self-esteem, and may affect the arousal of pride within other, out-of-school, contexts among all of the employees of a given school.

Many people have a tendency to take all the credit, although they had little impact on a given issue. Such behavior allows them to maintain their self-esteem and influences the quality of social interactions. The success of others, in which we—at least partially—participated, enjoys and builds a positive effect. That is a positive phenomenon within the interactional context. It allows us to feel positive emotions in numerous situations and—simply—makes us happy. Our self-esteem increases, which, again, translates into the quality of social relations. In the analysis, I referred to such a behavior (way of acting) as “hooking up” to others' success. One's desire to experience positive emotions, especially the one of pride, is so high that individuals are looking for an opportunity to feel it at all costs. Not having

their own success (measurable or experienced), they simply “hook up” to those who succeed. They use a positive emotion of another person to arouse it in oneself. That is not always a positive phenomenon, since individuals “hooking up” to success may not arouse sufficient motivation for actions that would translate into their individual successes.

In their narrations, teachers referred to pride being experienced because of **arousing their students' interest** in the subject taught and their small or spectacular successes in the field at hand (ability to interest in a given subject):

I never had to raise my voice, my students were quiet, and I got them engaged in the lessons. Although it sounds immodest [audible pride in the voice], I attracted their interest in the subject, which is evidenced by the fact that over a dozen of them graduated from the Polish Philology Department of the University.
[a woman, retired teacher, aged 84]

In addition to one's desire to maintain the self-schema, we are dealing here with internal attribution and reflection on the causes. The teacher interprets the silence during the lesson in terms of students' interest in the subject and a high appreciation of her professional work. Still, it is difficult to assess the reasons behind their behavior based on the above excerpt.

The quotation also refers to the next condition that can evoke the emotion of pride. It is **authority**. The teacher builds one's authority and implies particular ways of dealing with emotions in a specific context of their ideas about one's work. Those images constitute a constellation of the factors which

the teacher defines as a success or failure impacting within certain boundary conditions (regulations, practices adapted in a given institution, standards, interaction with colleagues, etc.). They, in turn, correspond with the specificity of a given institution, the specificity of working with students, and the tools available to teachers as part of their professional activity (e.g., manuals, textbooks, handbooks, exercises, multimedia, examples, cases, one's voice, way of conducting lessons, etc.). The authority enjoyed by a given teacher also becomes a tool limiting the occurrence of difficult situations during the class. It may be relatively easier for teachers of grades 1-3 of primary school to establish their authority, since their students are likely to quickly identify with the teacher. Based on the analysis of teachers' narrations, it can be stated that enjoying authority translates into more frequent emergence of positive emotions such as satisfaction and pride. Most of the teachers emphasizing their joy of work, job satisfaction of working with students, and pride in their own, as well as students' achievements had the authority of both students and other teachers.

In addition to pride of students' successes within the micro (interactional) context, we also find pride of **the choice of students to continue further education in accordance with the subject taught by a given teacher**:

Winning the top positions by students participating in Russian language competitions was a success. I am proud that several of my students graduated from the Russian Philology Department. One student even studied in Russia in St. Petersburg. That's nice.
[a woman, retired teacher, aged 77]

It is difficult to objectively assess whether the choice of the field of study by the students was dictated by the real interest in the subject awakened by the teacher, or suggested by parents, friends, or a matter of chance. However, the interpretation of the success adapted by the teacher indicates her willingness to maintain the self-schemata and is associated with the increase in status (prestige), which translates into an experience of pride. A similar characteristic can be found in the next quotation. Here, apart from the above-mentioned factors, there is visible pride resulting from **sustaining contact with school and a given teacher by a graduate student:**

We are happy with every little success. I have many students in my work who studied at the same faculty as I did. Yes, I think that there are a few such people, there are people who deal with the theater, film, and journalism. I think it is a kind of success for me too, because they come to me and talk about it. It is really nice for a teacher, and I think that even if there is only one such student, we can be proud of who has pleasant memories connected with the school and a given subject, it is a gem that gives a teacher such wings, wings, and is a kind of satisfaction, yes. Not a diploma, not a principal's or president's award, but just the effects that flow from children are important. Graduates who frequently visit us in schools are also a kind of such, such wings, that it is worth working, that it is worth devoting oneself to children, and sometimes it is worth engaging in their family matters. [a woman, junior high school teacher, aged 45]

Teachers try to appreciate the achievements of their students and it is a relatively measurable indicator of their effectiveness. Current and former

students unknowingly contribute to the increase in the teachers' satisfaction of their job. They are a measure of the teachers' success. It may positively influence the emergence and duration of social interactions. However, it should be noted that the pride of one person may cause jealousy in another person, which, in turn, can negatively affect the type and form of an interaction. Paradoxically, jealousy of other people can trigger the emergence of the emotion of pride:

The most positive thing is that graduates who graduated from the school many years ago sometimes come to see us. They come, they wait for this open day, when they can come, a lot of them always come, and I think this is such a very big positive thing in a teacher's environment, where colleagues sometimes look at the visitors with envy that so many people come to one person, and much less to others. Maybe it is also funny, but, unfortunately, jealousy occurs in the teaching environment due to the fact that previous students like some teachers more than others, and some teachers are more remembered and some less remembered. And this jealousy is sometimes nice. I feel that I am good...If I were not, they would not envy me [laugh]. [a woman, junior high school teacher, aged 45]

The last discussed factors influencing the emergence of pride in the teacher-student relationship are: **gratitude from students, positive attitude to work, and parents' satisfaction.** Gratitude is connected with showing teachers gestures of sympathy by students, although this category is characteristic mainly of teachers working in junior classes (classes 1-3), in which children aged 6-10 study:

It is so pleasant when a schoolgirl approaches with a card or an ordinary drawing and says: "I have done it for you." I am always deeply touched by their behavior. [a woman, primary school teacher of grades 1-3, aged 32]

In the quotes below, teachers not only point out gratitude as an action that affects the appearance of pride, but also indicate the importance of gratitude for their positive attitude to work.

The children's gratitude, their joy, and the fact that I know that they like me, that they cling to me, and that I can teach them something give me satisfaction. Yes, it is so grateful to work like this...as I said, most of those effects can be seen at the end of the year, when those children are, in fact, hugging me, do not want to leave. I am glad that I have chosen this profession. [a woman, primary school teacher of grades 1-3, aged 43]

The positive attitude to work is very important and translates to job satisfaction. It is the attitude to work that determines the appearance of pride in all of the contexts discussed above. That attitude influences the assessment of one's work, the assessment of the work of others, the evaluation of organization, profession, and the quality of interactions with colleagues, students, and their parents:

This is a grateful job. You can see the achievement of your goals. You can observe the translation of your work into the students' achievements. I can enjoy a child's success as my own. I am proud of my students. [a woman, primary school teacher, aged 37]

I can simply see that there are smiling kids, happy parents, I'm also happy with the results of my work. I think

that it is the advantage of this work. That joy of mine, of kids, and parents. I want to work then. [a woman, primary school teacher of grades 1-3, aged 44]

In the context of the present research, it can be pointed out that the feeling of pride increases one's motivation to act and work:

Each award stimulated me to work even harder, so I wanted to sit up late at nights and prepare teaching aids. [a woman, retired teacher, aged 67]

Therefore, employers should attempt to initiate situations—interactional episodes—allowing their employees to experience the feeling of pride for the emotion of pride can be a driving force for the emergence of successive positive emotions and can lead to an increase in the self-esteem of the individual.

Conclusion

Pride is an emotion that appears in response to the success achieved. It should be remembered that the definition of success is individual and a given employee, based on their internal definition, decides whether a given activity will be assessed in terms of success or not (see: Adams 1963). Such individual definition is crucial to the arousal of the feeling of pride. The emergence of a specific definition of success in the self-schemata can be compared to verbalization in the two-factor theory of emotion (Schachter and Singer 1962). Pride appears when something is done or something intentional is achieved. The informants pointed to the feeling of pride, smile, or joy emerging at the moment of achieving the intended goal.

They talked about their behavior in such a situation and a tendency to brag about their success and their achievements, although some teachers mentioned that they do not like to talk about it. When I asked them why, they claimed that they “feel uncomfortable,” embarrassed when they are praised. Rather, they referred to their inner satisfaction and pride that are not explicitly revealed in interactions.

As we have seen, pride appears in response to a number of factors (conditions) and related interactional and situational contexts. Pride in the teachers’ work may be a result of assessing the organization and profession as prestigious. It appears as a response to the individual’s belonging to a given organization and professional group. It is also visible in the context of assessing measurable achievements and successes of a teacher. Receiving prizes, praise, distinctions, diplomas, promotions, et cetera, is considered an objective criterion for positive social evaluation and is associated with social recognition and respect. It all affects the form and quality of interactions with colleagues and other people, not only those involved in the education process. A teacher embracing tangible effects of one’s work receives a higher social position, which is granted by a group of experts and is therefore accepted (although it can only be an apparent action) by co-workers and other interactants.

Pride arises in interactions, and in teachers’ work, it mainly arouses in relation to the teacher-student relationship, as well as one’s relationships with co-workers. The micro (interactional) context is

conditioned by the mezzo (evaluation) context, including the receipt of recognition and the individual definition of success.

As a result of the research, I can conclude that pride in the work of a teacher appears in three main contexts: 1) pride due to prestige, 2) pride due to recognition (appreciation), and 3) pride as a result of diverse, for example, teacher-student interactions. All the meanings of pride were provided by the teachers.

As has been pointed out, pride contributes (through shaping self-esteem) to an increase in the self-status and/or an increase in the sense of a certain level of power at one’s disposal. Referring to Kemper’s (1978) theory, we can assume that pride is not a sole result of satisfaction deriving from an increase in one’s status, but is a primary emotion arising in connection with a change referring to the level of power and status. Such an assessment of our action(s) in terms of success translates into a genuine increase in the sense of power and/or status.

In conclusion, in the article, I attempted to elucidate that the emotion of pride is one of the most important social emotions. By exerting a significant impact on the individual’s self-esteem and assessment of the undertaken actions, it is a motivating factor determining one’s faith in success. The practical implication for employers may be to undertake such actions that would enable their employees to feel pride, as the appearance of this emotion can contribute to an increase in work efficiency and employee’s satisfaction.

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The Disappearance of the Other: A Note on the Distortion of Love

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Abstract Against the backdrop of contemporary sociological theories of love, this article explores the disappearance of the other in contemporary love relationships by focusing on the relationship between love and depression. The aim of the article is twofold: first, to provide a theoretical framework to be able to grasp in what ways the other is threatened with erosion in contemporary love relationships and why this may cause depression; second, to exemplify it with empirical data consisting of human documents such as novels, interviews, sms- and messenger-correspondence. The first section, excluding the introduction, consists of methodological reflections. The second section introduces Hegel's thinking on love and discusses the perception of it by thinkers such as Honneth, Sartre, and Beauvoir, as well as its parallels with Giddens's idea on confluent love as a new egalitarian paradigm for equality in intimate relationships. The third section is mainly devoted to Kristeva's theory of the melancholic-depressive composite, but also introduces Illouz's concept of autotelic desire. In the fourth section, Han's idea of "the erosion of difference" and Bauman's thinking on "the broken structure of desire" are discussed in relation to the use of Tinder in contemporary culture. The fifth section consists of an analysis of excerpts from contemporary love novels and interviews that illustrates the disappearance of the other in contemporary love relationships. In the sixth section, a number of longer passages from a messenger conversation, ranging over a couple of months in duration, is reproduced and interpreted, mainly by help of Kristeva's thinking, in order to make visible the relation between the erosion of the other and melancholic depression. The article ends with a short conclusion.

Keywords Love; Freedom; Personal Identity; Intimate Relationships; Intersubjectivity; Other-Silencing; Melancholic Depression; Hegel; Kristeva; Giddens

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Few interpersonal phenomena have been described and explored as much as love. It is therefore difficult to say something completely new about love. However, society and culture are constantly changing, which means that the social conditions for love look different depending on the type of society and culture to which we belong. Over the past three decades, many sociologists have studied the structural transformation of modern society and its implications for love. Among them, we find Anthony Giddens (1992), who argues for the emergence of “confluent love,” which he understands as a new egalitarian paradigm for equality in intimate relationships. In contrast to romantic love, which includes an ideal of a lifelong relationship between man and woman, organized by existing ideas of masculinity and femininity, confluent love explores new ways of being in a relationship, which potentially dissolves the unequal power dynamics between men and women. In contemporary culture, love to a greater extent is something that is negotiated through a dialogue of mutual self-disclosure between equal subjects who express their needs and desires. It could thus be said that love is increasingly dependent on each partner’s ability and willingness to be vulnerable in the face of each other and therefore must be based on interpersonal trust. Since confluent love is a communicative act, it is also dependent on the ability of the partners to distinguish themselves from each other. “Intimacy is not being absorbed by the other, but knowing his or her characteristics and making available one’s own,” says Giddens (1992:94).

Although romantic love remains the dominant ideology, it is no longer viable in a world where sexual-

ity and gender are not taken for granted, but a work in progress. Higher rates of divorces and same-sex marriages indicate that the ideal of romantic love is questioned and that we live in a time and place where we need to try out and experiment with new forms of being in a relationship. This claim has support among sociologists who argue that the structural transformation of modern society in form of individualization, that is, individuals’ rights to pursue their interests, pleasures, and desires as long as they respect the rights of others and the common good, has resulted in the erosion of the ideology of romantic love (see, e.g., Smart 2007; Inglis 2013). Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1995) capture this change by speaking of “the normal chaos of love,” which, according to Jeffrey Weeks (2007:8), can be seen as “a revolution in everyday life, which has yet unrealized and unsettling implications for the relationship between private passions and public life.” Also globalization is seen as crucial for the changes that have taken place in intimate relationships, since it allows for mixed relationships across borders and cultures, as well as digital- and long-distance relationships, all of them demanding new practices of sexuality and love (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001; Plummer 2015).

Many sociologists argue that the social conditions of love have changed during modernity and that this affects the ways sexuality and love are performed. However, they do not embrace Giddens’s optimism for the potential of the ideal of confluent love to overcome unequal power dynamics within relationships. Lynn Jamieson (2011:12) views contemporary love as practices of intimacy, which “enable, generate, and sustain a subjective sense of

closeness and being attuned and special to each other”, but emphasizes that intimate relationships are still structured by inequalities (Jamieson 1999:477). Eva Illouz (2007:30) even suggests, “Giddens’s analysis only resonates with the psychological credo that celebrates equality in intimate relationships and has failed to interrogate the very transformation of intimacy it purports to describe.” As she understands it, advice and exercises in literature on intimacy about the importance of, for example, telling each other one’s interests, pleasures, and desires point at a process of rationalization which counteracts intimacy rather than a new ethic of personal life. “In the context of close relationships, intimacy, like self-realization and other categories invented by psychologists, became a code word for ‘health’...In this narrative, an absence of intimacy now pointed to one’s faulty emotional make-up, for example, to a fear of intimacy” (Illouz 2007:46f.). In short, the therapeutic narrative in a certain sense creates the suffering it is intended to cure. In a similar manner, Zygmunt Bauman (2003) stresses that the freedom Giddens ascribes to contemporary love relationships has nothing to do with moral responsibility for the other, that is, being there for the other no matter what. Instead, love has become incorporated in the logic of the market with devastating consequences for the sort of trust involved in self-disclosure as a being with needs and desires that one cannot satisfy on one’s own. In agreement, Illouz (2012) posits that love hurts because it has become something we choose, just like any other commodity, in an abundant marketplace. Love is no longer one, but infinitely many. According to Byung Chul Han (2012), the crisis of love is not caused by the great supply of possible love partners or others, however.

It is worse than that. The other is threatened with erosion, which also is one of the main reasons why we, to a greater extent, suffer from depression, in contemporary culture, he argues.

Against the backdrop of these arguments, this article explores the disappearance of the other in contemporary love relationships by focusing on the relationship between love and depression. The aim of the article is twofold: first, to provide a theoretical framework to be able to grasp in what ways the other is threatened with erosion in contemporary love relationships and why this may cause depression; second, to exemplify it with empirical data. The first section, excluding this introduction, consists of methodological reflections. The second section introduces Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s thinking on love and discusses the perception of it by thinkers such as Axel Honneth, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir, as well as its parallels with Giddens’s ideas on confluent love. The third section is mainly devoted to Julia Kristeva’s theory of the melancholic-depressive composite, but also introduces Illouz’s concept of autotelic desire. In the fourth section, Han’s idea of “the erosion of difference” and Bauman’s thinking on “the broken structure of desire” are discussed in relation to, among other things, the use of Tinder in contemporary culture. The fifth section consists of an analysis of excerpts from contemporary love novels and interviews that illustrate the disappearance of the other in contemporary love relationships. In the sixth section, a number of longer passages from a messenger conversation, ranging over a couple of months in duration, is reproduced and interpreted, mainly by help of Kristeva’s thinking, in order to make visible

the relation between the erosion of other and melancholic depression. The article ends with a short conclusion of the results.

Methodological Reflections

In my research project on what I call depressive love, of which this article only captures a small part, I explore the prominent position given to love and depression in contemporary culture's emotional script, that is, different kinds of cultural agreements concerning what emotions we are supposed to feel, and how we are supposed to express them.¹ Who has not heard of those two, in many ways, opposite moods? Many even use their experiences of love and depression to judge their state of well-being, mental health, and quality of life. Simply put, it is hard to understand oneself on a personal level without thinking in terms of love and depression. One could even say that we are surrounded, and permeated, by ideas on its meaning and significance.

More specifically, my exploration of contemporary emotional life is driven by a set of surprising observations I have made over a few years; namely, that stories about love in science, literature, art, and everyday life conversations relatively often are linked to depression. In some cases, love is depicted in a manner that makes it possible to speak of love with depression or depressive love, which made the following questions come in view: What is depressive love? Has depressive love existed during other times? How is depressive love staged in contempo-

¹ For an elaboration of the concept of emotional script see, for example, Arlie Russell Hochschild's book *The Managed Heart. The Commercialization of Feelings* (1983).

rary culture? What are the purposes of depressive love in contemporary culture? In the last question, the problem appears at its peak. Could it be that depressive love is an effect of changes in societal structures, an unforeseen consequence of the current ideal of love or other competing ideals, which affects the individual in a negative way? There is urgency in answering these questions as a part of a comprehensive diagnosis of the general state of contemporary culture. Ultimately, the aim is to give the actual observation—depressive love, that is, intimate relationships that causes depression and thus could be seen as a distorted form of love—more precise content. It is the latter that this article contributes to.

The method used in the research project is characterized by a strive for polyphony, coexistence, and interaction. I borrow the meaning of these concepts from Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoevsky's *Poetics* (1984:5), which starts with inquiries into the open and endless changing nature of language. Different beliefs and views on love and depression meet in the shape of conversation and quarrel. According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky is the creator of a new literary genre: the polyphonic novel. In Dostoevsky's works, Bakhtin (1984:7) writes:

a hero appears whose voice is constructed exactly like the voice of the author himself in a novel of the usual type. A character's word about himself and his world is just as fully weighted as the author's word usually is; it is not subordinated to the character's objectified image as merely one of his characters, nor does it serve as a mouthpiece for the author's voice. It processes extraordinary independence in the struc-

ture of the work; it sounds as it were, alongside the author's world and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voice of other characters.

We might as well talk about what since Florian Znaniecki and William I. Thomas have been called human documents, that is, descriptions of individual experiences, which show that individual actions are the result of interpersonal relations and participation in the social life. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918) is based on everything from brochures, daily newspapers, articles, congregation documents, and law documents, to personal letters, and an analysis of a Polish farmer's, Wladyslaw Wisniewski, life story, or autobiography.² Human documents take on all kinds of different shapes; letters and diaries, biographies and life stories, dreams and self-observations, essays and notes, and photos and movies (Plummer 2001). The very diverse nature of perspectives that human documents bring to light become pivotal if we want to understand what it means to be a social being; someone who lives in an ever-changing world, where one constantly has to negotiate the meaning of reality with others. Or, as the philosopher John Dewey (2005:32) puts it, when he discusses the psychologist William James' thinking: "a universe which is not all closed and settled, which is still in some respects indeterminate and in the making...an open universe in which uncertainty, choice, hypotheses, novelties, and possibilities are naturalized." What has been said, written, or caught in a picture is allowed to stand its ground without judgment or assessment; at the

same time, an analysis from a mainly sociological and social psychological perspective is carried out. As you will notice in this article, the human documents have led me to both social philosophical and psychoanalytical theories and lines of reasoning to be able to develop the notion of depressive love or the disappearance of the other in love relationships, which is the subject matter of this article.

The human documents, or stories, that I work with to a great extent derive from people whose paths somehow coincided with mine in my everyday life. In this sense, the research approach has been opportunistic, which implies that one uses one's own life experience and the opportunities that appear in one's everyday life in order to deepen the scope of knowledge.³ In my case, this approach has meant talking about emotional experiences with people that I, as a private person, have happened to meet in different contexts and by different reasons, instead of me, as a researcher, beforehand making a selection of, and an agreement with, people to interview about their emotional lives, focusing on their experiences of love and depression. The approach has also resulted in my informants mainly being upper-middle-class Swedish heterosexual women. There are few who do not have at least a doctoral degree in the Humanities or the Social Sciences. The material is thus limited and generalizations are only possible to do on a theoretical level. I have as far as possible avoided interviews between a researcher and an informant, since there is, in my opinion, something artificial in such a situation. In a way, the traditional qualitative interview parallels the clini-

² For a more elaborate discussion see, for example, Martin Bulmer (1986).

³ For a discussion on different forms of opportunistic research, see Jeffrey W. Riemer (1977).

cal study where the ones you want to gain knowledge of are separated from their natural context and therefore are not going to behave and act as they usually would do. Thus, my work can be seen as ethnographic, in the sense of striving to study how people spontaneously, and without reflecting on it, are talking to each other. What are we talking about when we speak of love and depression with others? What does it sound like when the lover talks to the beloved? How is meaning created in these conversations?

To grasp how we talk about love in everyday life, and to identify the factors that are causing our conversations about love to slip into conversations about depression, I have to a great extent worked with human documents such as e-mail, sms-, and messenger-correspondence. These are all human documents typical of contemporary culture which people I got to know along the way shared with me. I also use other forms of human documents to be able to further clarify the displacement of love, love with depression, and depressive love, and to be able to bring a depth to the analysis, and, in certain cases, another meaning to the displacement than the one my “informants” are aware of. Those other forms of human documents, stemming from literature, art, and science, are stories and images of love and depression that constitute parts of the emotional script.⁴ There is, of course, an ethical dilemma with the approach. How can the people I met along the way, and got to know, defend themselves from my interpretations of them or from my analysis of their

stories? They cannot. The interpretations and the analysis are mine and are often carried out by seeking support in established scientific theories of love or depression, which I also perceive of as being stories and thereby equal with what is being interpreted or analyzed. On the other hand, everyone has given their consent of me using their conversations about love in my research and presenting parts of it in this context. A possibility to comment on the completed text has also been given to them. Surprisingly, most of them have declined to do so; not wanting to read my analysis of their stories, nor wanting to find out the context in which I have embedded them. One of the persons I had a conversation with says: “It feels too bad right now, maybe later, when I have more distance.” To minimize the violence that interpretations and analysis of statements made by others may bring about, due to the fact that the other always is radically different from oneself, I have given their statements and stories ample space, allowing them to spread out over the pages in a raw and original version. I have made some linguistic improvements to make the text more reader-friendly, though. I have also allowed these stories, and similar stories stemming from the work of other sociologists, art, literature, or poetry, to guide my choice of theoretical tools; that is, the scientific theories I use to interpret and analyze. In this way, one could say that I have worked inductively, which means that I have drawn my conclusions on the basis of the conversations on love and depression I have gathered over time. But, this is not entirely true. Rather, I have worked abductively; I have drawn my conclusions on the basis of rewrites and reinterpretations of stories, seeking guidance in other stories. I have, in a way, even worked retroductively, meaning that

⁴ I have simply collected stories about love and depression from science, art, and everyday life that I naturally have access to and can relate to without too much effort.

I have identified factors that have to be present for something to even be perceived as love with depression or depressive love.⁵ Finally, I have made certain that I am being “true” to all of the stories I use, even if I do not make any claims on there ever being an absolute truth in this context. On the other hand, there is a kind of scientific and biographical honesty that I have safeguarded. Throughout the text, the reader will be able to distinguish the different stories from one another, and to detect my interpretations, analysis, and conclusions. This is important from an ethical standpoint, even though I am aspiring to polyphony.

The empirical material that appears in this article was collected during 2010-2015. Excerpts from three interviews or face-to-face conversations, one sms-conversation, and several messenger-conversations are used in this article, altogether including seven different informants. Six of these informants are Swedish, well-educated women in their thirties and forties. One of these informants is a Swedish, well-educated man in his sixties.

Love: A Definition

In this article, I define love as a relationship in which there exists a mutual recognition of one another as social beings with concrete needs and desires. Love is that which remains when one expresses those needs and desires that one cannot satisfy on one's own in a manner that makes the other satisfy them.

⁵ For an overview of different inferences such as induction, abduction, and retrodution see, for example, Berth Danermark and colleagues (2002, Chapter 5). For an in-depth discussion see, for example, Mikael Carleheden (2014).

When another human being, by free will, satisfies the needs and desires we cannot satisfy ourselves they do not just take care of us, “hold us,” they also express their love. In the mutual, emotional affirmation that love demands, the involved parties are united through their very needs and desires. According to Hegel (1991:§ 158, Addition), it is through this sort of communicative act that we acquire a personal identity and adopt a positive relationship to ourselves:

Love means in general the consciousness of my unity with another, so that I am not isolated on my own, but gain my self-consciousness only through the renunciation of my independent existence and through knowing myself as the unity of myself with another and of the other with me...The first moment in love is that I do not wish to be an independent person in my own right...The second moment is that I find myself in another person.

Each individual must create the other, and the self, in an instance of mutual co-recognition. In this sense, “the needy and desire-bound aspect of love is reconciled with its opposite, the free and self-giving aspect of love,” as Alison R. Bjerke (2011:90) puts it. It can thus be said that love tries to transcend the differences between two unique beings with needs and desires, but is dependent on there being a difference to stimulate the drive for unity. If these needs and desires are neglected, the subject feels violated as an individual with a concrete personal identity and the positive relationship to oneself is threatened. Under ideal circumstances such violations can lead to what Honneth (1995) calls a struggle for recognition. Who are you? Who am I? Which needs do we

need to fulfill for each other in order to express our love? To exemplify, let me reproduce a passage from an sms-correspondence between Amanda, a forty-year-old Swedish woman with a position as a senior lecturer at a university, and Gustaf, a sixty-year-old Swedish man who runs his own business in the health sector:

AMANDA: Okay, then I know your position. Your view of women is unacceptable to me. That's how it is. Despite my valiant and persistent efforts. You have nothing left to give. I think you could afford some honesty, to give us something of worth. I've had so many hopes tied to us and would truly like if my memory wasn't just unpleasant. I want us to be a beautiful love story. For you to be the man I always wanted. At least give me that. Call! I love you.

GUSTAF: We're not getting through to each other. You no longer possess a language. Our problem isn't about a view of women, or issues tied to equality between men and women. But, it is about us not having seen each other, not trusting each other, not been caring for each other, and lost our language, which was the foundation of our love. And you don't love me. On the other hand, I think you love your child.

AMANDA: You've also lost your linguistic magic. And you don't even want to meet me to restore it. You know nothing of my ability to love. Nothing. Unfortunately.

GUSTAF: It's the same disgusting hatred as the last time. I can't reach you and you can't reach me. Once we did. It was fantastic.

AMANDA: You know, I thought you knew me and I thought you could be there. For me. You're right. All I have is my scraps with fragments of love. No. I don't hate you. I'm deeply hurt and sincerely sorry.

GUSTAF: We have to live with our loneliness. We can manage.

AMANDA: No. It would've been so much better if you spoke truthfully and just admitted that you don't have any energy left to try to restore us and love me. Your talk about loneliness is just a façade. Words. You don't take a single loving initiative. It's okay. I'm not going to die. Even if that would've been flattering to you. Go now and I'll find my way to love elsewhere.

GUSTAF: Go ahead.

AMANDA: ...We can no longer talk. The words are dirty. Despite that I reached out my loving hand. But, you didn't hold it. That's the truth.

GUSTAF: No.

AMANDA: Yes. I wrote that I loved you. I called you the minute I got home. I waited for you to take the initiative. I wished fervently for you to do that. But, you couldn't even pick up the phone and answer or call me back. And that's how it goes. Over and over again. Don't you miss me? Don't you want anything? You're going to live like you do right now? Is that how you want it? Really?

GUSTAF: We both need to be loved unconditionally. We both prioritize work and we don't make one common decision. Ten minutes ago you were going to start loving X again. What do you think about how all of this sounds to us?

AMANDA: You thought it was a good idea. How do you think it sounds? I've said that I love you. You don't even want to call. What do you expect?

Despite the signs of anger, hesitation, and resignation, the conversation may be interpreted as an attempt from both parties to express who they are and what they need. How can two people, despite their differences and shortcomings, reach that

point of understanding each other? It is true that love creates and sustains differences, since the other is an individual with a concrete personal identity and as such defined by its difference from the self. However, love also sublates difference. If the self and the other at a certain point in time reciprocally decide to listen to each other's expressions as needing and desiring beings and act upon these needs and desires by freely surrendering themselves to each other, they would receive themselves back again. According to Hegel, love includes a moment of freely surrendering oneself and thus receiving oneself back again. "This is the moment of ethical commitment in which lovers release each other to be free individuals by committing to love one another regardless of the contingency and changeability of their desires. Insofar as the surrender is mutual, each lover's self-giving satisfies the other's desire, and love attains its ethical dimension and its rational form," Bjerke (2011:82) argues. Or, as Hegel (1988:418) puts it in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

For love is a distinguishing of two, who nevertheless are absolutely not distinguished for each other. The consciousness or feeling of the identity of the two—to be outside of myself and in the other—this is love. I have my self-consciousness not in myself, but in the other. I am satisfied and have peace with myself only in this other—and I *am* only because I have peace with myself; if I did not have it, then I would be a contradiction that falls to pieces.

According to Hegel (1991), the communicative act that ideally takes the form of love is necessary to gain actual freedom. It is first when the subject

makes oneself into an object by committing oneself to particular projects in the world that the pure and undifferentiated free will transforms into actual freedom. Put differently, abstract personal identity materializes in the form of concrete personal identity. With parallels to Hegel, Honneth (1995) speaks of love as the kind of recognition that guarantees the subject both physical and emotional integrity, which is crucial for the development of self-confidence. In some cases, however, the misrecognition of the subject as a unique being with concrete needs and desires leads to a mutilated self. The possibility to develop and realize one's personal identity is thwarted. The person in question is thus denied actual freedom and a positive relationship to oneself. Charles Baudelaire (1982:16 [translation—EE]) describes it thus:

As a result, the project of love is fraught with conflict. When it is impossible for two persons to meet as free subjects acting in the world we could go so far as to speak of the victim and its executioner: "Two lovers may be never so enamored of each other, never so satisfied with desire; one of the two will always be cooler and less obsessed than the other. One is then the operator or the executioner, the other the surgical object or the victim."

It could thus be said that there are only two ways to exist in relation to the other. Either you make the other into a passive object to be viewed and understood, or the self will become dependent on the other for its meaning: in other words, either sadism or masochism. We can recognize the perspective in the following lines from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (2001:227):

Everything which may be said of me in my relations with the Other applies to him as well. While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me...I am possessed by the Other; the Other's look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculpts it, produces it as it is, sees it as I shall never see it... makes me and thereby he possesses me, and this possession is nothing other than the consciousness of possessing me.

From this perspective, to recognize the other as a subject and the self as an object will be a failed project, which for Sartre results in a dialectic of sadism and masochism. The idea of love as an intersubjective experience will, on Baudelaire and Sartre's reasoning, be an irrational argument. However, according to Beauvoir, Sartre's view on love as a phenomenon constituted by sadomasochistic power games risks being intoxicating to the extent that the lovers lose sight of themselves completely (Cleary 2017). The view parallels Hegel and Honneth's thinking. Love is to overcome sadomasochistic power games and form a union, mainly by expressing one's needs and desires, in a way that makes the other understand and freely act upon them, and vice versa. Nevertheless, Beauvoir's account of love is more sensitive to the power dimensions involved in relation to sex and gender. "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman," she argues in *The Second Sex* (2009:283), stressing that although sex is a biological given, gender is a social and cultural given. Not until recently have women questioned their subordination as the second sex, that is, inessential beings who acquire their personal

identity only in relation to men, hence are reduced to objects of the male gaze (Beauvoir 2009; Cleary 2017). Women have thus been unable to answer the question of who they are independent of men. As a woman, one tends to view oneself as part of man, merging with his personal identity, and in the name of love come to abandon and disavow oneself. "She abandons herself first to love to save herself; but the paradox of idolatrous love is that in order to save herself, she ends up totally disavowing herself," Beauvoir (2009:691) writes. This dilemma is possible to overcome, though. If love between man and woman is founded on mutual recognition of each other's freedom as needing and desiring beings, they will be able to see themselves in themselves, as well as in each other, and both reveal values and ends in the world (Beauvoir 2009). The solution echoes in Anthony Giddens's theory of the transformation of intimacy in which he argues that the democratization of the public sphere is structurally correspondent with the democratization of the private sphere. Whereas political democracy concerns free and equal relations between individuals and "the constitutional limitation of (distributive) power" (Giddens 1992:186) in the public sphere, intimacy concerns "emotional communication, with others and with the self, in a context of interpersonal equality" (Giddens 1992:130), in the private sphere. According to Giddens (1992:189f.), the foundation of all forms of democratized relationships is "respect for the independent views and personal traits of the other."

As indicated in the introduction, many sociologists disagree with Giddens's view on contemporary culture as a time and place that encourage

and nourish democratic relationships within the private sphere or what Hegel understands as an intersubjective experience in the form of mutual surrender in which the lover's self-giving satisfies the other's needs or desires. As I understand it, traits of modern society such as individualization, rationalization, and commodification have, despite the increasing material welfare and equality among men and women, lead to a tendency to neglect the struggle for recognition as a concrete being with needs and desires in intimate relationships, thus—to an inability to establish an intersubjective relationship. In earlier texts, I have discussed this in terms of the reduction of the self to an object, in the form of self-silencing, and the reduction of the other to an object in the form of self-communication (Engdahl 2017; 2018). Nevertheless, I have concluded that it is better to talk about the latter as other-silencing. Self-silencing as it comes to expression in, for example, depressed women's narratives, is the most obvious misunderstanding of love, and parallels Beauvoir's understanding of female subjectivity as something that tends to get lost in the male gaze. Women simply avoid giving voice to their own needs and desires, in advantage to fulfilling the needs and desires of men (Crowley 1991; Engdahl 2017; 2018). Other-silencing that has been facilitated not least by the last decade's technological development is a more contemporary example of the distortion of love. Nevertheless, it has the same consequences as self-silencing in that it does not enable recognition of oneself as a being with needs and desires or actual freedom and the development and realization of a concrete personal identity. In a worst-case scenario, it ends up with depression.

The Melancholic and Depressive Composite

It seems like we are prone to build ourselves with layer upon layer of lost love objects. To avoid grief, we internalize the lovelessness of the beloved as a part of ourselves: an internal failure that we constantly return to in the form of self-hatred. In this state, which is actually a form of narcissism, it becomes difficult to handle loneliness. Hatred and aggression are hidden and there is a refusal to see oneself as separate from the object of love which one was completely dependent on at birth—the mother. One does not realize that all the hate and all the aggression within oneself cannot destroy the beloved object. The beloved is a free subject that alone can satisfy the needs one cannot handle on one's own. To ignore this separation is to transform the love and indestructible desire for the other into melancholy and depression (cf. Freud 1917). An example of this dynamic is found in Julia Kristeva (1989:11): "I love him, but I hate him more, because I love him and do not want to lose him, I place him in me, but because I hate him, the other inside me hurts me, I'm bad, I'm not worth anything, I'll kill myself."

In *Soleil Noir: dépression et mélancolie (Black Sun: Depression and Melancholy)*, first published in 1987, Kristeva views melancholic depression as an expression of a fragile self that is fused with the other: originally the mother. But, what are the foundations that lay the ground for the inability to mourn a lost love object, for example, the mother: weak parenting, biological sensitivity? That question is Kristeva's and she argues that the sphere of melancholic depression is a shadowland between the biologi-

cal and symbolic. Thus, she does not separate one from the other. Melancholy and depression are intertwined since there are no clear borders between what in psychiatry has been called melancholy and the type of illness, which only responds through administration of chemical therapy, Kristeva (1989) argues. Instead of separating different types of depression and determining the effect of different antidepressants or mood-stabilizing drugs on their symptoms, Kristeva (1989) adopts a Freudian perspective. She explores the melancholic-depressive composite by taking object loss and the linguistic modification of signifying bonds as her starting point. Accordingly, the inability to linguistically modify signifying bonds distinguishes the melancholic depressive person. The person who suffers from melancholic depression is not able to put into words their experience of shortage or despair, the needs and desires that they cannot satisfy themselves in a meaningful way. Naming is not experienced as a reward for the melancholic depressive person, but as a punishment, which in many cases is anxiety provoking. Thus, the thought process deteriorates; it becomes slow and sluggish, just as the psychomotor activity does. Alternatively, the thought process and one's associative abilities are accelerating in an uncontrolled manner. Regardless, the intolerance of object loss and the inability to find consolation or compensation in language use distinguishes the melancholic depressive person. The accusations of oneself, which depressed people often express, are within psychoanalysis often perceived as being an accusation towards the other. It could thus be said that the melancholic depressive state houses an ambivalence. A confusion between the other and the self is taking place. Karl Abraham

(1994) and Sigmund Freud (1917) talk about the desire to swallow the other or to fill one's holes with what one lacks, as a strategy that depressed persons use to be better able to live with the other that they cannot tolerate. Chopped into pieces, chewed and spat upon; everything is better than an absolute loss of the love object.

According to classic psychoanalytical theory, we could further understand the aggression directed towards the other as an extension of an unexpected sexual desire: a displacement of the real loss that is manifested in the anxiety of losing the other by surviving oneself. However, the subject is not yet separated from the object of love, since the object of love is kept alive by being incorporated in the self. It is this type of melancholic depressive person Kristeva (1989) describes as suicidal, meaning they wish to disappear, since the other, which is being housed within them, is evil but at the same time a part of their individual personality. In more modern psychoanalytical treatment, it has been noted that depressed people do not always consider themselves to be wronged or offended, but instead experience that something is seriously wrong with them. It has thus been suggested that the composite of melancholy and depression is the most archaic form, or expression, of the non-symbolic unnamable narcissistic wound, which is so valuable to the melancholic depressive person that no one on the outside can be used as a reference point. The depressed mood is and remains the only substitute that the melancholic depressive person can relate to and it is being nourished and kept alive in the absence of any other substitute. The thought of suicide is, in such a case, not a disguised act, a tragic and ill-concealed wish

to kill the other, but a fusion between the depressed mood and the despair felt by the melancholic depressive person, and it goes beyond the impossible love, which is always to be found somewhere else. The depressed is not, in this case, mourning an object, but the thing. The real is not given any meaning at all, because it has been separated from the object of love and desire. According to Kristeva (1989), this is precisely what the poet de Nerval is trying to grasp when he speaks of an event with no presence; a light with no representation. The Thing is the imagined sun; simultaneously shining and black. I imagine the black sun as a sharp and penetrating light that is recurring in so many near-death experiences. You are not dreaming of the sun, but of an even stronger light. As I understand psychoanalytical theory, the problem seems to be that no erotic object can replace what was originally lost, which for the person in question leads to one disappointing love following another. Alternatively, the depressed will fall back into solitude with the unmentionable thing, which can only be recognized in experiences of discouragement and despair: the substitute of the thing. Kristeva (1989) parallels the melancholic depressive person with an atheist robbed of all meaning. At the same time, she is also a mystic, since she stays wounded and captive by, and in, her own affections. The affective is therefore the depressive's business. Without any trust in the healing powers of language, the melancholic depressive person cannot physically unite with the other (over time), nor can she psychologically process its loss.

The affective also seems to be an aspect of what Illouz (2012) calls autotelic desire, which is a hyper-autonomous form of desire that aims at itself.

One of her male informants describes it thus:

I hate one-night stands. It feels empty. I need the whole package that enables me to fantasize...Without love I have no inspiration in my work: it is my drug. I cannot be alone. I mean I cannot be alone in my head. Not alone physically. I have no interest whatsoever in intimacy between four walls. I am done with the whole business of domesticity. But, not with fantasy. [Illouz 2012:233f.]

Autotelic desire is the pleasure that emanates "from the e-mails we sent to each other from home, each of our spouses not knowing, and it was all the sweet agony of waiting to see him, to fantasize about him endlessly at night, and when waking up, and at work. Being in this situation where you can't talk to each other, and see each other when you want, really makes you long for him" (Illouz 2012:134). The autotelic desire consists of dreams and images of the object of love and is common in relationships where the loved one is absent. According to Illouz, this hyper-autonomous form of desire emanates as a result of the difficulties we have today when it comes to letting our imagination and desire fuse with reality. Further Illouz (2012) argues that the autotelic desire is an aesthetic, rather than a moral, experience.

The Erosion of Difference or the Broken Structure of Desire

In his book *The Agony of Eros* (2017) Byung Chul Han argues that contemporary culture threatens to undo the possibility of democratic relationships in the private sphere by the erosion of the other's difference in favor of personal achievements. In his

view, many indicate that we live in the first epoch of time where not only children, but also adults, tend to believe that all they need and desire is possible to achieve by their own performance. Such a mindset kills everything that takes the other, who is characterized by its difference from the self, as a starting point. Han exemplifies that with the help of the bestselling novel trilogy *Fifty Shades*. The heroine of the novel at the beginning acts surprised over the fact that Mr. Grey sees their relationship as a business deal. A contract that regulates their intimacy is signed. The heroine is supposed to “keep herself clean and shaved and/or waxed at all times” (Han 2017:14). Everything that might be perceived as dirt must disappear, as if the characters in the novel were extremely aware of the potential disgusting features of the others’ naked bodies. The S&M games that are carried out are all controlled by rules agreed upon in advance. No real transcendental experience occurs. Nothing unlikely is made possible. At most, “sweet torture” is achieved. Eros is being perverted as it becomes a formula for pleasure or consumption, which can only be understood in terms of performance. It encourages a quantitative approach to love. One simply starts counting how many partners one had sex with, and, all of a sudden, just by performing a simple addition, one has calculated one’s fuckability.

The infinite number of possible partners on the open sex and love market creates a kind of decision anxiety that makes it impossible for the self to give complete attention to the other, which is what it takes to make, and keep, the other as an absolute desire. Both the past and the future are threatened by the tyranny of the moment when the sexual act is

unleashed, as anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2001) would have put it.

The line of argumentation can be illustrated by the use of Tinder as it comes to expression in the article “Tinder and the Dawn of the ‘Dating Apocalypse’” by journalist Nancy Jo Sales, published in *Vanity Fair’s* September issue, 2015.⁶ A man in his twenties talks about how hard it is for him to settle down when without any effort he can hook up with a girl and have sex with her within twenty minutes. “It’s just a numbers game. Before, I could go out to a bar and talk to one girl, but now I can sit home on Tinder and talk to 15 girls,” a second one says. “I’ve gotten numbers on Tinder just by sending emojis,” says a third one. “Without actually having a conversation—having a conversation via emojis,” he continues. But, that is not the kind of woman you marry, they all agree. It is more about immediate satisfaction, according to the men from the article, who are all in their twenties and live somewhere in the New York metropolitan area. “It’s instant gratification,” a Brooklyn-based photographer says, “a validation of your own attractiveness by just, like, swiping your thumb on an app. You see some pretty girl and you swipe and it’s, like, oh, she thinks you’re attractive too, so it’s really addicting, and you just find yourself mindlessly doing it.” The young women from the article agree: “It’s, like, fun to get the messages.” “If someone ‘likes’ you, they think you’re attractive.” “It’s a confidence booster.”

It is easy. But, it is not about love. At least not in the Hegelian sense that I have introduced. No needs or

⁶ See: <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/08/tinder-hook-up-culture-end-of-dating>. Retrieved January 04, 2020.

desires are expressed, hence, not acted upon. “We don’t know what the girls are like,” says one of the young men from Sales’ article. “And they don’t know us,” says another. To get emotionally involved with the other is seen as an obstacle that needs to be overcome by the young women from Sales’ article. “It’s a contest to see who cares less, and guys win a lot at caring less,” says one. Another says:

It’s not like just blind fucking for pleasure and it’s done; some people actually like the other person. Sometimes you actually catch feelings and that’s what sucks, because it’s one person thinking one thing and the other person thinking something completely different and someone gets their feelings hurt. It could be the boy or the girl.

The above quote points out an unwillingness to transcend the differences between the self and the other, which results in an inability to gain actual freedom. A researcher, who is being consulted for Sales’ article, states that the use of Tinder is showing the same patterns as the consumption of porn. The increased availability, made possible by technical developments, has a backlash, psychosexual obesity:

The appetite has always been there, but it had restricted availability; with new technologies the restrictions are being stripped away and we see people sort of going crazy with it. I think the same thing is happening with this unlimited access to sex partners. People are gorging. That’s why it’s not intimate. You could call it a kind of psychosexual obesity.

As Bauman (2003) has come to understand it, sex has been included in a sort of mall shopping men-

tality. Shopping for sex does not even need to include having sex. “It’s a recreational activity. It’s entertainment,” as journalist Louise France put it in “Love at first site,” *Observer Magazine*, already in 2002.⁷ Internet dating or dating app culture does not necessarily mean that we have more sex. Some statistical data point in another direction. “Number of sexual partners increased steadily between the G.I.s and 1960s-born GenXers and then dipped among Millennials to return to Boomer levels,” psychologist Jean Twenge (Twenge, Sherman, and Wells 2015:2273) concludes on the basis of her and her co-authors’ analysis of changes in American adults’ sexual behavior and attitudes, based on the General Social Survey, an almost annual, nationally representative survey that has been administered between 1972 and 2012, including data from 11 million respondents. However, internet dating and the industry of dating apps would not flourish if it were not aided by “the removal of full-time engagement, commitment and the obligation ‘of being there for you whenever you need me’ from the list of necessary conditions of partnership” (Bauman 2003:66). None of the women or men from the article speaks of the abomination that they perceive as being an emotional involvement with the other. The ability to move on without feeling remorse and anguish—to leave the other behind—seems to be an ability one must practice and master pretty well to make it in the current free relationship market. To fall crazily in love is not on the agenda for any of those sparkling people. Infatuation and love are not even being mentioned. It cannot be found on Tinder, as far as they are concerned.

⁷ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2002/jun/30/features.magazine187>. Retrieved January 04, 2020.

While Han speaks of how eroticism has vanished, Bauman (1998) discusses “the postmodern erotic revolution.” The result of this revolution is an erotic, or a broken, structure of desire, which is disconnected from three crucial aspects: (a) sex in the sense of biology and reproduction; (b) love in its insistence of eternity, exclusivity, and loyalty; and (c) the production of immortality and thus art, politics, life strategies, and all other aspects of culture. Only such an unbound version of desire could sail freely under the flag of pleasure-searching. Without being obstructed or guided the wrong way by any other purposes than the purely experience-oriented one, it is free to establish itself and negotiate its own rules as it goes along. But, this freedom cannot be changed nor ignored by desire. The newly gained indeterminacy is certainly a source for intoxicating experiences of freedom, but also of extreme insecurity and anxiety. There are no longer any legitimate solutions to rely on. Everything must be constantly renegotiated and caught on the fly. One could therefore say that we have never been freer than what we are right now. The peculiar thing is that this freedom does not seem to lend itself to self-transcendence, since it is pure and abstract and does not relate to the other as distinguished from the self. In current literary love fiction and everyday life conversations, we increasingly find this pattern illustrated. Among other things, we find it in the shape of love work in the absence of the beloved.

Love Work in Solitude

The author and journalist Lena Andersson’s best-selling and award-winning novel, *Egenmäktigt förfarande: en roman om kärlek* (*Willful Disregard: A Novel*

About Love) from 2013 (English version, 2016), and its standalone sequel *Utan personligt ansvar* (*Without Personal Responsibility*) from 2014, serve as good examples of love work in solitude. In both novels, Andersson paints a picture of a long and partly painful wait for signs and signals from the loved one. There are many calls, without answers. This excludes Eros as being the kind of love depicted in Andersson’s novels. Rather, the lack of erotic is a feature of Andersson’s writings on love. As far as sex appears at all in *Willful Disregard* (2013), it is in the shape of bad sex. Carnal lust is not depicted at all. The most physical activity we get to partake in is a recurring marathon. The lover (Ester Nilsson) goes alone for a run. This physical activity becomes a recurring topic of conversation between Ester and the object of her love (Hugo Rask):

He asked if she had been running a lot during the weekend and she answered that she had run forty kilometers since they met. The running was still like half a transmission between them, both the premise and the barrier for their intimacy. It’s a full Marathon! he called. But, spread out over three different runs, she said. Why did she call today? Because she was hoping to get an answer to the considerations he promised her he’d make? Not really. That wasn’t realistic. She called because the itching was back, the feverish itching of love, which forever lies dormant in one’s cell system and could break out at any point. [Andersson 2013:149 (translation—EE)]

What kind of intimacy is Ester and Hugo engaging in? Most of the novel depicts Ester’s thoughts, dreams, or even her fantasies about Hugo. Is it not a fact that Hugo actually loves Ester, or at least that

he should love her? Peculiarly, Hugo is not the one that Ester turns to when searching for answers to her questions. Instead, she turns to her own reason. Ester's obsession is not revolving around what Hugo really feels or thinks, but revolves around what Ester, after reasonable consideration, thinks that Hugo should feel and think. The novel is mainly a description of Ester's inner conversation with herself.

In Andersson's second novel, this inclination reveals itself instantly, among other things, when Ester's new object of love, Olof Sten, at the beginning stage of their relationship declares that there is no chance he will ever leave his wife. Ester "thought that this was exactly what married people would say when they met someone who swept them off their feet and shook up their world. When people wanted something that much, it happened that they stated the opposite" (Andersson 2014:23 [translation—EE]). Ester is not taking Olof literally. Nor is she taking into account her friend's voice—telling her to listen to what he is actually saying:

Ester had a friend called Lotta. She often stressed her opinions. "Take people literally, that's the most practical and simple. Don't interpret, assume that they mean what they say." Lotta was wise and careful. Ester's opinion was that nothing good could come out of being wise and careful, and taking people literally when it comes to nascent love relationships, since language in this particular case was used to fool oneself, get rid of difficult decisions, and avoid love. People feared love, so she had read in the writings of the great poets, since it carried the seed of the greatest pleasures and therefore also to the most painful losses. [Andersson 2014:24 (translation—EE)]

Through this line of reasoning the other turns into a shadow figure, in a sense that relates to Han's idea of the erosion of the other. The understanding of love that develops is thus far from Hegel, Beauvoir, and Giddens's understanding of love as a form of communicative democracy in the private sphere, in which the lovers in respect for each other's personal identity are united by responding to each other's needs and desires. To the extent it is about intimacy it seems to be more of a question of Sartre's idea of sadomasochistic power games. But, Ester sees herself neither as the operator nor as the executioner, in Baudelaire's corresponding narrative of intimacy. Ester is a woman who does whatever she wants to do on her own terms; kind of like an anti-heroine and what seems to be a new female ideal in contemporary culture. Instead of engaging in sadomasochistic power-games, I suggest that Ester is silencing the other by devoting herself to autotelic desire because of her inability to let her imagination and desire fuse with reality. Although she sees herself as rational, the affective seems to be her business. Or, perhaps she is just playing the game inside her own head, which could be understood as a defense mechanism. I will come back to the idea at hand later in the article.

Sara, a Swedish PhD student in her thirties, not only makes the affective her business, but also embodies autotelic desire as an aesthetic experience:

SARA: During almost ten or fifteen years I thought he was the most beautiful creature on earth. His face was perfect. His skin spotless. His style...He was cool. I could see the two of us in front of me when I closed my eyes: pure beauty. People always noticed us when we were together.

ME: Did you love him?

SARA: Love? Of course I loved him. My whole desire was directed towards him. He was always present. For many years I was living in his shadow. He was my invisible companion...When I was in therapy for my insomnia, he was the only thing I talked about. Besides crying and insisting that the only reason I was in therapy was because of my insomnia...We hit a point when my therapist suggested that he was a break.

ME: A break?

SARA: Yes. Break was the word she used. I think she meant that he was my escape from reality, the boredom of everyday life. I remember thinking she was brilliant coming up with that idea. I used to tell that to myself—he is a pause—kind of like a mini-vacation. But, the truth is, he was always present.

If we continue to listen to Sara it becomes obvious that the line is thin between pleasure of autotelic desire and what Han understands as the agony of love:

ME: In what way was he always present?

SARA: I'm not sure...I talked to him almost all the time.

ME: Talked?

SARA: Sent letters, e-mail, SMS...and in between I felt his presence...As I said: he was my invisible companion. I lived in his shadow.

ME: In his shadow?

SARA: Like, it didn't matter what I did or who I met... He was always there. And I wanted it. For him to be with me. He lived within me and I was waiting for a sign, a signal—a message, anything. Oh my God, I suffered if I didn't get it. Sometimes I've viewed it as self-injury. One of my best girlfriends actually told me that I might as well be injecting heroin. I guess it was then I started to think about it like that.

In summary, the agony of love is not always equivalent to depression, but it usually touches on misrecognition as a being with needs and loss of meaning and social reality or actual freedom. Julia, a Swedish female senior lecturer in her forties, has experienced such loss and describes it thusly:

Not only did he not answer my messages, he blocked me from all his social media activities. He kind of erased me from his life, as if I'd never existed. The whole situation felt unreal. I felt unreal. At the same time...I had thousands of messages from him in my computer, on my cell phone. I mean, he had sent thousands... even an unpublished poem that he was working on, like, two hundred pages to read while I was trying on shoes. He was funny. He made me laugh. Anyway, was I supposed to ignore ever having met him, exchanged messages twenty days in a row? Didn't these messages exist? Of course they did, but there was no reality behind them. The words were the reality. I couldn't or didn't want to realize it. I'm not stupid. I just couldn't believe that something that meant everything to me—then and there—meant so little to him. I became Alice. "Who the fuck is Alice?" Alice in Wonderland. I fell down the rabbit hole.

It may seem like we have ended up far from Anderson's novel character—Ester. But, in fact, Ester is also thinking that "what was life-changing for her was pastime to Hugo":

For short periods of time she considered this thought. Then she dismissed it to be able to endure. In April, she wrote two long letters she sent by mail. She wanted to explain herself. She wanted to formulate what she had felt, and why she had acted and believed the

way she did, saying that his actions had shaped hers, that no one acts without reacting too; he had given her good reason to make her assumptions. She did not expect a response and did not receive one either.

[Andersson 2013:33 (translation—EE)]

From Autotelic Desire to Melancholic Depression

To elaborate my argument and show not only the thin line between autotelic desire and the agony of love, but also how other-silencing may cause depression, let me end with an analysis of a number of longer passages from a messenger conversation, ranging over a couple of months in duration, between Clara and Ann, two Swedish women in their thirties:

CLARA: I went to Zack [an American man in his forties that Clara met on Tinder], we had amazing sex, which we always have. He tells me in bed that he will go back to San Diego this Sunday for a new job that was way too good to turn down; two months with a good salary and a free car and accommodation. Since he is a freelance musician, he couldn't get that type of job in New York during those months.

ANN: Hm... That was still kind of fine. He has to work.

CLARA: Yes, but now he is here [in New York] for a few days and is working on a musical and is so stressed about it, and everything with the jet lag and stuff, so he has difficulties sleeping and didn't want me to sleep with him. He really is stressed out and neurotic and sensitive, but that's also why I like him.

ANN: Yeah, but consider yourself too. Does he at all have time for you in his life? And what space do you give yourself in your life? It seems to be all about him.

CLARA: He said he wanted to meet this Friday and we said that I could visit him in San Diego in August, because I can, I'm going to California anyway and haven't decided when I'm going. But, I haven't heard from him since I left him on Tuesday, and I think he simply dumped me in his own way...and that's probably how it is then...

ANN: Yes, then that's how it is.

CLARA: I'm really sorry about it...and that I could have those strong feelings for him for a long time without him feeling the same...that I can fool myself this way.

ANN: But, Clara, I don't think you love him. Not with the way he treats you. He's only hurting you. You must watch out for yourself.

CLARA: I don't know how to watch out for myself, it's as simple as that. And I should really only focus on how I feel in that, and, as you say, what space do I occupy in my own life and in his, if I want it that way. But, he has been truly passionate with me and for me.

ANN: Okay, but let that go for a while and focus on everything else in your life except just him. For real. It's important.

CLARA: We've been in touch pretty much every day since January [for six months]...

ANN: Yes, and you can continue to stay in touch. But, what does your connection look like? What do you talk about?

CLARA: I have never felt this way for any other but him, that's how it is. Not even for Viktor [a Swedish man in his late forties that Clara earlier had a longer relationship with, but left him because she found out he was cheating on her, or at least suspected he was]. There is an attraction and electricity between us that I've never experienced before. My body is totally addicted to him.

ANN: Is that so? That's bad.

CLARA: I know...but, as I said... I just have to get that it is over and also take care of myself and my needs, I know that...but he is just totally my type... complicated, neurotic, hypersensitive, super bright, super creative, super talented, self-absorbed, egocentric and I'm going to fall apart if he doesn't contact me again, or doesn't want to see me on Friday or have me come to him in August...

ANN: Narcissist, how sad.

CLARA: Yes, self-absorbed and low self-esteem, maybe not really narcissistic.

ANN: Shit, the same! You can't be thaaaat dependent on a guy no matter what.

CLARA: No, I know, I really must stop that...but he's not a regular man... At the same time Anders [a Swedish man in his forties that Clara earlier had a relatively short and shallow relationship with and who back then didn't want to get any more serious than hooking up when convenient in time and place] is sending pictures of the nice little cottage he's building.

ANN: It is possible that Zack isn't a narcissist. But, why is he so important to you? Try to answer honestly.

CLARA: Because he is just as fine as I have tried to describe him. It is something so special between us and I haven't experienced that before. He reaches places in me and parts of my personality that no one else has even come close to before. Sounds like a cliché, but that's how it is. And I don't want to lose him, but I realize that might happen. Yet, I think he feels the same way about me. Or, at least that's what I have thought because he told me so.

ANN: Well, I think you have to deal with your feeling of abandonment.

CLARA: Yes, I know. And it will never happen. I will probably continue like this for the rest of my life; like getting involved with men who don't want me in a deeper sense because I can't or don't dare to love someone or let myself be loved for real. It's depressing to realize that and to realize that I probably never will have a functioning, healthy relationship with any man. I'm getting suicidal just by thinking about it. I will always be truly alone.

ANN: Maybe. Or, you are working hard to put words to your feelings of abandonment and by doing so objectifying them and distancing yourself from them.

CLARA: I know that Anders wants me in a deeper sense now, but my body doesn't want him anymore...

ANN: Of course, you won't be alone forever, Clara.

CLARA: Yes, that's how it's going to be. Ann, I know it. That was just like another confirmation of that fact. I wish that my body wanted Jules [a colleague in his fifties who lives in New York]. He wants me too, but it [Clara's body] doesn't want it, so it's like not possible. My body just wants Zack.

ANN: Don't listen to your body then. Give it a chance with Anders. Get a life here [in Sweden].

CLARA: That's not possible. If I don't want to have sex, it won't work. And I don't want a life in Sweden. But, it's all so freaked out. I'm such a freak, for real. I must get myself together. I won't text Zack anymore, I've said and done all I can to keep him.

ANN: Good. Then that's a closed chapter.

CLARA: Yes, I know!

ANN: Put a parenthesis around all men for a while. Promise me. Enjoy your wonderful life instead.

CLARA: Yes... I should...but I don't have a wonderful life... If Zach doesn't get in touch with me again, I will fall apart for real and not want anything more to do about love. I'm too broken to love.

Already at the beginning of the conversation between Clara and Ann we can see the contours of Clara's unwillingness, or even inability, to accept a break with Zack. At the same time, she fears that this is exactly what will happen. Maybe it has happened already? Zack has probably left her behind. Moved on as if nothing happened. Clara cannot handle that thought. It is unbearable. Zack awakens emotions within her that she has never been in touch with before. What Clara fails to see is that she is captured in her own affections, which brings to the surface traces of distant memories of long-lost love objects. She is carrying all of these, a time gone by, as if they were stored in her body. Zack is greater than anything she has ever experienced before when it comes to love: "complicated, neurotic, hypersensitive, super bright, super creative, super talented, self-absorbed, egocentric." But, this combination of personality traits will, according to Clara, destroy her. Does she wish for her own destruction? Is she enjoying the idea, or does it not matter to her anymore, because she thinks she is "too broken to love"? Or, is she simply unable to speak of her experience of shortage or despair in a meaningful way?

The conversation between Clara and Ann continues in a manner that is not distinctively different from earlier. At the same time, Clara's intolerance towards object loss clearly grows stronger:

CLARA: Zack still hasn't contacted me. And I haven't been able to refrain from sending e-mails and sms. I have zero dignity, but he has zero maturity.

ANN: Precisely! Fuck him. You have to.

CLARA: I know. But, I don't get any of it. How did this happen? Why is he treating me like dirt? Why am

I allowing myself to be treated like dirt? There must be an end for this kind of thing on my part. After my e-mail and after my last sms where I ask him to respond to whether he wants to see me tonight and that I understand if he doesn't want to, and in that case I will throw away his number and do my best to forget about him and leave him alone if he just tells me if he wants to end it with me or not, I receive this response: Hey, thanks for writing. I really think the world of you and would love to see more of you, opportunities permitting. I don't want anything serious, though. And it feels like it's getting more serious than I'm up for. As I've said, given the opportunity for us to spend time together—where we live in the same city, for example—that would be one thing. As it stands, the only time we've had in the same city has been burdened by the fact that one of us has just crossed several time zones to make it happen. This does not, in my experience, lend itself to casually getting to know and enjoy one another. I'm totally attracted to you and would love to hang out when we can—naked and otherwise. Unfortunately, tonight is not going to work. As for California, let's discuss a few weeks down the road. OK? Thanks, Z

ANN: Dump him!!!

CLARA: Right? I'm not going to answer and say nothing, right?

ANN: Say thanks, but no, thanks!

CLARA: What is he really saying here?? Why does he say he's attracted to me and wants to hang out? He simply can't take that I'm completely dumping him. He doesn't want to lose my affirmations and he thinks I want to meet him on his terms in California.

ANN: He wants to have sex when the opportunity permits it. I'm sorry to have to say it. But, I'm pretty sure that's exactly how it is. Clara, he is actually pretty honest and types it like it is. What more is there to get?

CLARA: Yes, you're right. That's how it is. I thought it was more, we've had a deeper connection than that. I thought... So, who the HELL does he think he is??? The worst is that I can't stand the thought of not having any more contact with him... I can't stand the thought of completely dumping him.

ANN: Then you must take what you can get and stick with it.

CLARA: But, I'm not getting anything...and what I get is so fucking immature and unfinished and undignified. I must dump him. I know. It's going to take some time, but I have to.

ANN: Yes. Just do it! Please.

CLARA: Or, maybe I'm also just on this maturity level, that thought is frightening to me. What never can become real; just being thought.

ANN: Come on!

CLARA: But, I wanted more with him...

ANN: Make sure you get it then. You are the best and deserve it.

About a month later the conversation still focuses on Zack:

CLARA: Yes, Zack, yes...oh my God...we've been going at it, mostly with our phones, and he's now after many months back in New York for a few months before he's going off for the next gig, and the first thing he does is pick up the relationship with his ex that he said he'd ended...just because she's "conveniently close by"...and if I had only lived there, things would've been different, he says...but like hell it would've. He's immature and way too self-absorbed and sensitive and very, very creative and intelligent. Why, oh why, am I falling for that type...but I'm dead-in love with him. Don't want anyone else, so I'm

making all the mistakes one can make... Tried to date others, but my body only wants him, what the hell is wrong with me?? And Anders...poor thing...has tried to get me back all this time until just recently when he realized it is over and that he, himself, is partly to blame. Now he's unfriended me on Facebook. I actually think he, in a way, was serious about wanting me back "for real" and take his chance on me and, as he said, to live many, many happy years together. He was totally ready to share everything with me and to be a real man and partner. He was even prepared to give me another child, at least he said so... And I actually believe that he's truly unhappy now, for real...but I don't want him, I feel nothing for him anymore and it's so damn nice. And how lucky I was that we didn't end up together when I wanted us to. It would've only ended in misery...

ANN: But, you never want anyone who wants you... that's not good at all...

CLARA: No, I know...but one day I will!! Or, I'll be lonely for the rest of my life. That's something I'm beginning to accept. Although if Z wants me for real one day, then I want to marry him and spend the rest of my life with him... That's just how it is.

ANN: Yeah, that's what you say now...

CLARA: No, somewhere inside me I know that's how it is, and it feels really good. I think it'll be us in the end. Haven't felt such a peculiar and sensible confidence before, despite the mess we're in right now. We have a connection I've never had with anyone else, and when we are together in real life, it's incredibly intense on all levels. And when we're apart, it's like we can't let go of one another, even though we know that that might be the best thing to do right now. Maybe he'll mature... In lack of something better: a soul-mate and the most intense sex I've ever had. I think

he feels the same way. I think he also feels like we are something completely unique together.

ANN: Yes, maybe...

CLARA: Or, he doesn't, and he'll manage to push me away and will end up regretting it for the rest of his life.

ANN: If he feels like you're completely unique, why isn't he taking a chance on you?

CLARA: He's really afraid and wants to be in control. I don't think he's met someone like me before. You know, European with all that comes with that and having a higher education and such... People like you and I don't grow on trees!!! People like us are, like, MUCH of EVERYTHING.

Clara knows very well where Zack is at in the relationship. He has, with all necessity, explained himself on that point. "I don't want anything too serious, though," he bluntly writes. Which is precisely what Clara's friend, Ann, also perceives and confirms. "He wants to have sex when the opportunity permits it. I'm sorry to have to say it. But, I'm pretty sure that's exactly how it is." Yet, Clara is not receptive to what any of them says and seems to honestly mean. Instead, Clara shows both grief and aggression towards Zack, which, according to classic psychoanalytical theory, is a symptom of depression. The depressive state she embodies houses an ambivalence. The accusations of oneself, which melancholic depressive people often express, is also present in the above passages from Clara and Ann's conversation. Whatever Zack is capable of giving is "so fucking immature and unfinished and undignified," Clara writes. A confusion between the other and the self is taking place. Perhaps that is why we here are dealing with "what never can become real; just being thought," as Clara puts it. In the conversation between Clara and

Ann, both idealizations and defamations take place. In one single sentence, Clara manages the feat of both idealizing and defaming Zack. "He's immature and way to self-absorbed and sensitive and very, very creative and intelligent," she writes to Ann. Thereafter she defames herself: "Why, oh why, am I falling for that type...but I'm deadly in love with him. Don't want anyone else, so I'm making all the mistakes one can make... Tried to date others, but my body only wants him, what the hell is wrong with me?" Clara is here separating herself from her body, in terms of explaining why she cannot or does not want to bond with another man, which can be understood as a defense mechanism. It is not only she who consciously wants Zack. It is also her body. It can thus be said that she sees her body as an interactive partner supporting her claims. When Clara, on the other hand, posits that Zack has probably never met someone like her, an idealization of herself takes place, which also includes Ann. "I don't think he's met someone like me before. You know, European with all that comes with that and having a higher education and such... People like you and I don't grow on trees! People like us are, like, MUCH of EVERYTHING." This passage is interesting in itself, since Clara verbalizes two orders—that of reason and emotion—as complementary in sustaining her self-esteem. From what Clara says, love does not seem reasonable, and yet she explains why Zack should want her referring to "rational" reasons. She is thus rationalizing her situation in order to not frame herself as "insignificant" (in the eyes of the other). This also seems consistent with her bringing up Anders (who wants to build a relationship with her) when referring to Zack (who does not)—in order to highlight her desirability and, thus, sustain her self-esteem. Although it seems that not

ending up with Anders was due to a “lucky” coincidence, since, at the time, Clara wanted them to be together, perhaps she hopes that, at some point, it will turn out the same way with Zack. The aggression that Clara expresses towards Zack seems to be an extension of an unexpected sexual desire: a displacement of the real loss that is manifested in the anxiety of losing him by surviving herself. “Maybe he’ll mature,” Clara writes. “In lack of something better: a soulmate and the most intense sex I’ve ever had. I think he feels the same way. I think he also feels like we are something completely unique together.” This is the voice, or more correctly—the writings, of an abandoned subject. However, Clara is not yet separated from Zack, since he is kept alive by being incorporated in Clara’s sense of self. She resembles the type of melancholic depressive person Kristeva describes as suicidal, meaning that she wishes to disappear, since the other, which is being housed within her, is evil, but at the same time—a part of her individual personality. Clara is far from being the only one, amongst the persons I have spoken to, who brings life to this train of thought. Elin, a Swedish, highly-educated woman in her thirties, expresses it thus:

X has already deprived me of my dignity and pulverized me into nothingness. Something is seriously wrong with me, but we already knew that. I’m depressed and just care about him so damn much. Can’t bear to fail in love like this, but can’t see the end of it. Can hardly breathe right now because of all the anguish and sadness... How can it be that X just doesn’t want to see me... He’s still crushed by his ex, he said on the phone yesterday. She was a 22-year-old drug addict... Like, what the hell! I’m too good for him...

right??? And to not just be able to say you don’t want to hang out anymore and I have said way too many great and honest and bleeding things... Can someone shoot me now? He really despises me now. I am such a fucking stupid moron. Fuck, shoot me, please. X should crave for, and beg and cry to hang out with ME! And if he’s not doing that, then he’s not worthy of me. Fuck, I’m so damn tired of diminishing myself and being self-effacingly destructive. ENOUGH NOW!!!

Elin speaks of herself as being depressed. She thinks, just as Clara, that there is something seriously wrong with her. The fact that Elin expresses herself in such manner is not necessarily a result of her frustration with the other. It could also be a result of a more primitive self that is hurt, incomplete, and empty: a narcissistic wound. As I mentioned earlier, it has been noted that depressed people do not always consider them to be wronged or offended, but instead experience that something is seriously wrong with them. It has thus been suggested that the composite of melancholy and depression is the most archaic form, or expression, of the non-symbolic unnamable narcissistic wound, which is so valuable to the melancholic depressive person that no one on the outside can be used as a reference point. As I have come to understand it, the melancholic-depressive composite can be seen as an unconscious way to deal with rejection—with not being desired the way one wants to be desired—and includes a wide range of emotions and discursive practices aimed at rationalizing one’s situation. Refusing to let go, there is no other choice but to withdraw from the other by enacting autotelic desire or silencing the other, that is, staging the love relationship or playing the game in one’s own head.

However, this means that one refrains from the struggle for recognition as a concrete being with needs and desires, which one is unable to satisfy on one's own. In this state, one's free will remains abstract and one's self or personal identity unrealized. When silencing the other, the depressed mood is and remains the only substitute that the melancholic depressive person can relate to, and it is being nourished and kept alive in the absence of any other substitute or because the other as a concrete being has been silenced. The thought of suicide is, in such a case, not a disguised act, a tragic and ill-concealed wish to kill the other, but a fusion between the depressed mood and the despair felt. The object of love is transformed to a light with no representation and the problem seems to be that no erotic object can replace what is lost, which leads to one disappointing love relationship following another. Alternatively, the depressed will fall back into loneliness with the unmentionable thing, which can only be recognized in experiences of discouragement and despair. Melancholic depressive persons are robbed of all meaning, because they have left the intersubjective sphere in which abstract freedom and personal identity transform into actual freedom and personal identity. They are captured by their own affections, which is a state that, in my opinion, is encouraged by the individualization, rationalization, and commercialization of love in contemporary culture, and aided by the increased use of Internet in intimate communication. The stage is set for a desire that does not seek its satisfaction, that is, a desire that desires desire or autotelic desire. Without any trust in the healing powers of language, and I would add mutual self-disclosure as concrete beings with needs and desires, melancholic depres-

sive persons cannot physically unite with the other (over time), nor can they psychologically process its loss. In Clara's life, one bad relationship follows another, and discouragement and despair seem to be the feelings that Clara most strongly identifies with:

It is over with Zack. He turned out to be exactly as immature as I feared, but as I hoped he would turn out not to be. He has hurt me and treated me like shit. I'm so fucking sad and so fucking disappointed and everything feels SHITTY. He's probably had a girlfriend this whole time and just had me like an erotic adventure, and so when I'm only a few blocks away from him, he freaks out 'cause he can't handle his feelings and the mental issues involved in keeping his girlfriend and me apart, I'm fairly certain that that's what happened. And it feels SHITTY, to have been deceived and scammed by him... And I hate it. And to not have meant more to him than some kind of fictitious adventure when I was so fuuuucking in love. And when I should've taken all the warning signs seriously like everyone else said and did... I'm such an idiot, Ann. But, NOW it's OVER with him.

Conclusion

From this article, we have learned that it is common to understand love as a game that can be played without mutual recognition of one another as needy and desiring creatures worthy of loving care. This distortion of love results in a tendency to not let go of lost love objects and a need for strategies to handle the absence of love in an intimate relationship. One strategy is to enact autotelic desire, that is, a hyper-autonomous form of desire that aims at itself and causes strong emotional experiences. Another strategy is to internalize the lost object of love

as part of the self, resulting in melancholic depression, that is, an affective state in which it is impossible to put one's experience of shortage or despair into words in a meaningful way. In both cases, the other as concrete being with a personal identity is neglected in order to keep the own personal identity intact or avoid loss of self-esteem. However, personal identity and self-esteem is dependent on the free and self-giving aspect of love. Although love tries

to transcend the differences between two unique beings with needs and desires, it is dependent on there being a difference to stimulate the drive for unity. Contemporary culture's stress on individual freedom and independence neglects the necessity of the other's radical difference for the development of personal identity. This becomes evident when considering the disappearance of the other within contemporary love relationships.

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“Living with Illegal Feelings”—Analysis of the Internet Discourse on Negative Emotions towards Children and Motherhood

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Abstract The aim of the article is to show the socio-cultural conditions influencing the ways of expressing emotions and feelings by mothers. It presents the results of the analysis of the Internet discourse on negative attitudes towards motherhood and/or a child/children. The text is built on the author’s research on the issue of “regretting motherhood” and is based on a qualitative analysis of the content—blog entries/posts: nieperfekcyjnie.pl [notperfect.pl], matkawygodna.pl [slackermom.pl], mamwatpliwosc.pl [ihaveadoubt.pl], and in the group—Internet forum—*Żałuję rodzicielstwa* [I regret parenthood]. The theoretical basis were the concepts included in the sociology of symbolic interactionism.

Keywords Motherhood; Emotions; Motherhood Regret; Internet Discourse

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Motherhood can be seen both as a woman’s individual experience and as a social institution (Rich 1976). Research conducted in various socio-cultural contexts show the diversity of motherhood and the variability of maternal practices depending on the historical moment, as well as the social group (Hryciuk and Korolczuk 2012). Whether and how motherhood begins and how it is implemented does not depend only on a woman’s decision and does not constitute her individual ex-

perience, as it is determined by the socio-cultural context. Motherhood is also deeply politicized and linked to various ideologies and visions of society (Hryciuk and Korolczuk 2012:10). It constitutes a capacious category, especially nowadays, because as a result of socio-cultural transformations we are dealing with a diversification of maternal and parental practices, and thanks to the development of medicine and modern reproductive technologies, also the possibility of being free from motherhood (voluntary childlessness) or fragmentation of motherhood (e.g., surrogate mothers) (see, e.g., Badinter 1998; Budrowska 2000; Slany 2006; Hryciuk and Korolczuk 2012; Garncarek 2014; 2017; Kwak 2014). As Glenn (1994:2) points out, motherhood is now increasingly becoming a contested terrain where practices and gender discourses clash.

Despite the changes in this area, social researchers stress that women are still perceived through the prism of the maternal role, it is still an element of social expectations towards them (Budrowska 2000; Dzwonkowska-Godula 2015). That requirement is strengthened in the process of the socialization of individuals. What is also important is that social awareness and public discourse are dominated by narratives that especially show the positive aspects of motherhood. However, the experiences of contemporary women/mothers are to varying degrees consistent with the pattern of behavior expected by society. Their personal experiences are varied and show many faces of motherhood. It is perceived by women not only positively, but it is often associated with experiencing a number of negative emotions. More and more often we hear voices of women who admit that they do not like taking care of their

children or regret becoming mothers. The way the child is treated and the value attributed to it have also changed significantly (Garncarek 2014; 2019a). Those phenomena can be considered in the context of broader processes taking place in contemporary societies of Western culture, including Poland, for example, individualization, empowerment of individuals, personal and psycho-social conditions. As Giddens (2006) points out, modernity changes the most personal human experience, including the experience of emotions (Pawlik 2011:122). Society and culture influence not only what we do and what we think, but also, to some extent, what we experience and feel as actors of social life. The expression of our emotions has a social character. Culture and social norms make our emotions suppressed or we do internal work to arouse them within ourselves (e.g., in our maternal role). Sometimes, however, the power of emotions burst the corset of social orders, prohibitions, and expectations (Pawlik 2012).

Referring to the issues explored in this text, a discussion pertaining to emotions connected with motherhood (e.g., intensive motherhood, postnatal depression) has been noticeable in recent years. The issue of regretting motherhood, thus far not tackled by Polish sociologists, is a new and interesting field of research and scientific reflection (Garncarek 2019a; 2019b). The article will present the results of the analysis of the Internet discourse on negative attitudes towards motherhood and/or children. It was made on the basis of the author's research on the issue of regretting motherhood and, in the case of this text, is based on a qualitative analysis of the content—blog entries: nieperfekcyjnie.pl [notperfect.pl], matkawygodna.pl [slackermom.pl], [Qualitative Sociology Review • \[www.qualitativesociologyreview.org\]\(http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org\)](http://mamwatpli-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

wosc.pl [ihaveadoubt.pl], and in the group—Internet forum—*Żałuję rodzicielstwa* [I regret parenthood]. It will present socio-cultural contexts that influence the ways in which mothers who admit regretting their motherhood express their emotions and feelings. Concepts included in the sociology of symbolic interactionism, like Thomas Scheff's notion combining the ideas of the tradition of symbolic interactionism and psychoanalysis into a general theory of emotions, will provide the theoretical framework for the analysis.

“Old” and “New” Patterns of Femininity and Motherhood

For centuries family and motherhood had been the most important and, to a large extent, the only areas of action and activity for women, defining their relationships with other people and social groups, determining their social position. The perception of women as potential or actual mothers was associated with a specific socialization scheme and the consolidation of their tendency to sacrifice, care, engage in unpaid work at home, and a particular sensitivity and readiness to meet the needs of other people. At the same time, it determined the identity of women and was a criterion for their assessment (Budrowska 2003; Bourdieu 2004; Krzyżanowska 2014).

As a result of socio-cultural changes, including the activities of emancipatory movements, there have been slow changes in the sphere of family life, changes in the status and social roles of women and men, and gender relations. The changes taking place on a global scale also influenced the situation in Poland. They were primarily an effect of the broadly

understood modernization of societies, while the current acceleration—the post-modern phase of development—leads to their intensification. We are talking here about such processes as individualization, which exposes, among others, rationality, reflectiveness, and the aspiration of individuals to self-fulfillment (not only as an opportunity, but also as a structural constraint) (e.g., Beck, Beck-Gernsheim 2001; Giddens 2001; Beck 2004). The transformation of values should also be mentioned here. Above all, in highly developed societies, individuals are beginning to attach increasing importance to the issues of quality of life, autonomy, and free expression, questioning the tradition that can limit them. We are dealing with the liberalization of patterns of behavior, for example, concerning marital and family life and sexual behaviors (e.g., Giddens 2001; 2006; Inglehart and Norris 2009).

Significant among the issue discussed here are the transformations of femininity and masculinity patterns in Western culture, where the traditional gender model clashes with a new perception of women and men, based on equality and partnership. The clash between two opposing cultural gender models—traditional and modern—poses many challenges, not only at the individual, but also group and institutional level (Dzwonkowska-Godula 2015). In the new paradigm, marked by the third wave of feminism, motherhood as a social role and, at the same time, a component of a woman's identity is more often a choice than a constraint. However, it is a non-obvious choice (Krzyżanowska 2014). The decision on whether or not to give birth to a child, or how motherhood should be implemented, in a culture marked by risk (Beck 2004), consumerism, and

fluidity (Bauman 2006; 2007), is a challenge for contemporary women. More and more women are combining family and professional roles and treating both as equally important. At the same time, they point to various costs of motherhood—economic, social, psychological. Therefore, some of them turn away from children or postpone the decision to have a child (Garncarek 2014; 2017). Even so, it should be noted that today we are dealing with high standards and requirements for parents. Nowadays, not only the identity of an individual becomes a part of a reflexive project (Giddens 2001)—parenthood also becomes a project to be implemented. We are dealing with the professionalization of parenthood, which places, especially for mothers, many demands on them. Sharon Hays (1996) points to the emergence, especially in Western culture, of an “ideology of intense motherhood,” which includes the enormous amount of time, energy, and money needed for proper care and upbringing.

The change of contemporary patterns and norms leads to a transformation of the role of the mother, which makes it reasonable to define motherhood as a socially constructed activity (Forcey 1994:357). The dominant discourses of motherhood clearly indicate what qualities and attributes a “good mother¹” should have. Modern standards of good motherhood seem to rise and the demands on women are increasing (Medina and Magnuson 2009:90). It is very difficult to deny or reject the symbol of the

¹ Those are: patience, unconditional love, goodness, kindness, establishing a strong bond with the child (“being with the child”), putting children’s needs before one’s own, sacrificing oneself for children, coping (in addition, joyfully and patiently) with the lack of sleep and time for oneself and one’s ambitions (Lupton and Fenwick 2001:1011).

ideal mother, because motherhood is still perceived as crucial for social life. The social norms and social imperatives of the role, by introducing the dichotomy “good mother-bad mother,” reinforce the negative traits attributed to the construction of the bad mother. The behavior of mothers is socially evaluated and controlled in a way that men are not controlled. Mothers who have difficulty in meeting idealized standards are described as bad mothers. As Walls (2007) points out, there is a social mechanism of “mother-blaming,” which consists in attributing a special role to mothers who are responsible for the survival of humanity and blaming them for not doing well enough to accomplish key tasks for society. The image of a good mother is so strong that women who deviate from the ideal at hand expose themselves to strong emotional reactions from the rest of society, including social exclusion and even legal consequences (Kudlińska 2011:64). Women are expected to love their children, devote a lot of time to them, put them first, and be happy with it. There is no place for frustration or fatigue in this arrangement, because such symptoms lead to stigmatization of women and their perception as bad mothers (Badinter 2013). Women who perceive themselves as insufficiently good mothers may feel guilt and shame, and be frustrated and believe that they cannot cope with their femininity and/or motherhood. Taking into account contemporary changes and standards associated with education, labor market requirements, realization of professional career, contemporary motherhood becomes very demanding and difficult to realize.

It should be noted that both the new images of femininity and the new images of motherhood meet

criticism and rejection of some social environments, and the gender patterns manifested in stereotypes still dominate social life. Researchers point to manifestations of resistance against changes in the cultural model and gender pattern, as well as attempts to maintain or return to the traditional way of implementing femininity (and masculinity), especially on the part of neo-conservative environments. Also, modern models are not supported by the content promoted by the mass media (e.g., Arcimowicz 2010). According to Beck (2007), the recent changes in the definition of gender and gender relations in the countries of Euro-American culture have taken place more “in consciousness and on paper,” but not in the behavior and situation of men and women, especially when we analyze the division of household duties in families and the situation on the labor market.² The previously mentioned changes in cultural gender structures, including maternity patterns, are therefore more model than practical, as we still face difficulties in implementing new patterns in practice (Dzwonkowska-Godula 2015). As already mentioned, such difficulties may give rise to negative emotions in women in relation to their role as mothers.

Emotions as the Subject of Sociological Considerations

In ancient times, emotions were part of scientific dissertations (Szczepański 2011:25), but inscribed

² Referring to the research results, for example, in Poland, in most households, women are still solely responsible for the activities related to running the household. They deal with laundry (82%), ironing (81%), and preparing meals (65%). Cleaning and thorough cleaning also rests on women's shoulders (61% and 57% respectively) (CBOS 2018).

in modern sociological thought only around 1975, due to the first important publications in the research area (Anioł 2016:67). In recent years, in various areas of social sciences, including Polish sociology, there has been an increased interest in human emotionality. The turn towards the emotional sphere of human functioning is connected with the emergence of the so-called third sociology dealing with the phenomena of everyday life (Simlat-Żuk 2012:45-47) and the departure from Weber's sociology, which emphasizes the significance of rationalization and diminishes the role of emotions in the functioning of societies (Barbalet 2004:13). As Flam (1990) points out, at the root of this increased interest lies not only the exhaustion of other, classic areas of sociological inquiry, but also the observation that many social phenomena that occur in the surrounding reality simply cannot be explained by looking through the prism of a rational actor (Sawicka 2018). The perspective of explaining emotions through the prism of cultural phenomena has introduced a new quality, associated with a significant widening of the spectrum of causes for a number of phenomena occurring in the space of interpersonal relations.

Within the framework of the interpretative paradigm, emotions are understood as processes resulting from a specific relationship between the organism (the individual) and the environment (Lazarus 1991). In the paradigm at hand, the interaction between the individual and the environment, and their mutual influence, serves to create and maintain social relations (Pawłowska 2013:133). Moreover, there are several theoretical concepts concerning the understanding of emo-

tions.³ Feelings are referred to within that paradigm as the creation of an emerging experience, in which social factors play a role. Social conditions underpin the whole process of emergence of emotions—their arousal and extinction (Pawłowska 2013:134). In the sociology of emotions, the theories of symbolic interactionism describe social life through the perspective of an individual attempting to maintain a positive view about oneself. Identity and concept of the self become the regulators of human behavior. When individuals have a chance to maintain a positive image of themselves, they will experience positive emotions, and if they fail to do so, they will experience negative emotions (and there will be a mobilization to balance). An individual who draws information about oneself from self-knowledge and what the outside world seems to think about them (looking-glass self) refers to defensive mechanisms if there is no other possibility to confirm one’s positive self-image. Those strategies are used because unpleasant emotions cause pain that people try to avoid. All that influences behavior change, and consequently—emotions, which can serve as a tool of socialization (Turner and Stets 2009:174-176).

Thomas Scheff’s Concept of Pride and Shame

In the context of the issues discussed in the text, Thomas Scheff’s concept, which embeds emotions within their social origin, deserves special attention.

³ Dramaturgical approach (Goffman), cultural (Hochschild, Gordon, Thoits, Clark), constructivist (Averill), ritual (Goffman, Collins, Summers-Effler), symbolic interactionism (Mead, Cooley, Stryker, Burke, Heise, Scheff, Tangeney) (Pawłowska 2013:134).

As Turner and Stets write (2009:174), Thomas Scheff “combines ideas from the symbolic interactionism tradition and psychoanalysis into a general sociological theory of emotions.” The concept of shame, arising from embarrassment and awkwardness, and pride occupies a central place in his idea. Scheff analyzes the ways of dealing with the emotion of shame. At the same time, he suggests that shame is seen as a basic social emotion in the context of the social control system (Scheff 1987; 1988; 2000). According to the author, shame is an important social emotion for at least two reasons. Firstly, it signals a threat to social bond (Scheff 2000:97 as cited in Sawicka 2018:21) and, secondly, it is the most important mechanism of social control (Scheff 1988 as cited in Sawicka 2018:21). An important issue in Scheff’s concept is the self-observation of the individual, which, according to the author, is always aimed at evaluation. As a result of self-observation, shame or pride appears that anticipation is typical of an individual. Such a statement allowed him to propose a concept of a “subtle and widespread” system of social sanctions, operating precisely due to experiencing shame and pride (Scheff 1988 as cited in Sawicka 2018:21). In such systems of control, a pleasant feeling of pride or self-satisfaction is a reward for behavior in line with social expectations, while guilt and shame or humiliation—a punishment experienced by an individual for an offense against social norms, for example, those related to the role of a mother (need to care for children, sacrifice for children, particular sensitivity and readiness to meet the needs of other people, etc.). As individuals seek to feel positive emotions, such as pride, the result is social conformism and a high degree of social stability. Thus, pride and shame ensure social regu-

lation of behavior without the need for external supervision (Scheff 1990). Shame is the result of fear of exclusion from the group, fear of rejection, negative self-perception, low self-esteem, subordination, and assessment of one's actions as incompatible with how one sees reality expectations. Shame and guilt are secondary emotions, built on negative emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness (Turner 2009). Pride is a secondary emotion built on positive emotions, and is part of the family of emotions of satisfaction (Goleman 1997).

The emotions experienced by mothers are, in a way, important for the duration and functioning of society, as they uphold the existing system of norms related to the role of a mother. As Reewes (1982) points out, a woman's biological predisposition, duly justified by social institutions, has become a premise for the spread of the "maternity coercion," from which for every normal woman there is a duty to give birth, care, and ensure good upbringing. It should be added that in many societies, the number of children born by a woman is a measure of her social status, and it is a common perception that women who cannot comply with such socially determined scenario feel incomplete, regardless of other life achievements. As already mentioned, the social "coercion to motherhood" and the realization of the role of a good mother have been passed on to the younger generations for centuries as part of family socialization and through guidelines from numerous institutions, especially the Church. As Gawlińska (2003:34) claims, the stronger the pressure the more demographic processes of the modern world indicate birth rates declining. The problem of low fertility, recently observed and widely discussed in

Poland, intensifies that pressure. Thus, according to Scheff, maintaining social order requires the control of the individual through one's feeling of shame and its derivatives, for example, by using appropriate reinforcements in the form of specific messages (such as social programs and campaigns, statements of politicians, as well as ordinary people repeating common opinions such as: "woman = mother," "every mother loves her child," "a mother's heart will endure everything").

Research Methodology

The inspiration for research on the issue of regretting motherhood was, first of all, the recent observation of an increasing number of Polish blogs and Internet forums on maternal issues, including those focusing on the emotions associated with the role of a mother. Secondly, the publication of the Israeli sociologist, Orna Donath, who conducted interviews with Israeli women who regret becoming mothers. She coined the term "regretting motherhood" (Donath 2017), which I use in this article. It was decided to conduct similar analyses in Poland, but with the use of concepts of sociology of emotions as a theoretical background, and taking into account the specificity of Polish society and culture. The issue of regretting motherhood, thus far not addressed by Polish sociologists, has become an interesting field of research and scientific reflection (Garncarek 2019a; 2019b). The analyses focused on the socio-cultural context that can influence the ways in which mothers who admit to regretting their motherhood express their emotions and feelings; the emotional experiences accompanying women in their role as mothers; as well as how the fact of feeling and

expressing certain emotions influences the performance of the role. In the case of this article, selected issues raised during the analysis are presented—the focus is on the issue of guilt and shame in the context of regretting motherhood, including articulating negative emotions.

The results from the first stage of the research presented in the text are based on a qualitative analysis of the content of entries on blogs: *nieperfekcyjnie.pl* [notperfect.pl], *matkawygodna.pl* [slackermom.pl], *mamwatpliwosc.pl* [ihaveadoubt.pl], and the Internet forum *Żałuję rodzicielstwa* [I regret parenthood]. The analysis was based on search results for the phrase “I regret motherhood.”⁴ Next, a purposive selection of the mentioned blogs and groups was made. They contained numerous amounts of information and comments on the issues discussed here. After a preliminary analysis of the content, the author decided to follow the above-mentioned platforms—from June 2018 to January 2019. I observed:

- posts and discussions under the entry “Would you also turn back time?” on the blog *nieperfekcyjnie.pl* [nonperfect.pl];
- posts and discussions under the entry “Regretting motherhood—being nobody’s mom” on the blog *matkawygodna.pl* [slackermom.pl];
- posts and discussions under the entry “The birth of the sad mothers” on the blog *mamwatpliwosc.pl* [ihaveadoubt.pl];

- 30 posts on the Internet forum *Żałuję rodzicielstwa*⁵ [I regret parenthood].

The aim of the investigation was to identify what kinds of topics have been addressed, as well as how they have been framed. The basic unit of the analysis was a single text (utterance), and, next, a set of coherent texts that constituted a thematic, as well as meaningful, whole. Important in the research process was a general sense of the utterances and the socio-cultural context underpinning the stories shared by mothers, which was also their reference and interpretation. Following Szczepaniak (2012:110), my analytical steps included: 1) selection of empirical material—with particular emphasis on its possible formal uniformity allowing for comparing and juxtaposing the data (individual texts); 2) multiple analytical reading of the texts aimed at structuring the topics covered, as well as content presented; 3) creation of a categorization key resulting from reading the texts and constituting a structured set of thematic categories contained in the articles (categories of the key were the subsequent topics described in the analyzed texts or minor aspects of the main topics; the key was a kind of a list of issues covered in the research material and served to aggregate similar threads while attempting to capture maximum thematic diversity); 4) defining categories in the key to bring how they were created and understood by the researcher closer; 5) constructing tables with quotations that provide direct contact with the empirical material. The analysis included posts/statements that offered anonymous stories of women telling their own experience of motherhood. Unfortunately

⁴ Google Web Search.

⁵ See: <https://www.facebook.com/ZalujeRodzicielstwa/>. Retrieved January 06, 2020.

ly, the type of research material does not allow for presenting metric data.⁶ The presented research results are of an exploratory nature and their aim was to identify the problem and illustrate preliminary findings concerning the phenomenon of “regretting motherhood.”⁷

Living with “Illegal Feelings”

Women taking part in discussions on the aforementioned Internet forums focused on describing their own motherhood from the perspective of important events, sharing their experiences with other female speakers, attempting to understand experiences related to their motherhood. They were also looking for attention, mental support, sometimes a piece of advice. For some of them, as they noted themselves, the forum posts and discussions were a kind of mental cleansing.

The analysis of the collected material allowed for the initial identification of three main types of motherhood regrets. We can distinguish: 1) “regretting motherhood, but not children,” consisting in a negative attitude towards the social role of the mother, especially the role-related duties; 2) “regretting giving birth to / having children,” involving disliking them, disappointment and/or unloving, emotionally difficult relationships with the child/children;

⁶ Based on the collected data, it can be assumed that most of the speakers were young and middle-aged women, living in the city or in the countryside, and having one or two children (of different ages). Most of the speakers lived with the father of the child or another partner, while some of them raised their child/children on their own.

⁷ The author is in the process of carrying out in-depth research (IDI) and broader analyses on the issue of “regretting motherhood.”

3) pointing to both types of motherhood regrets. The main reasons behind regretting motherhood and the emergence of a number of negative emotions associated with the role of the mother were⁸:

- Excessive social expectations of mothers, including: feeling the pressure to be an ideal mother; fulfilling the role of a mother in line with social expectations, and experiencing related (growing) frustration;
- Fatigue of responsibilities related to the role of a mother;
- Lack of support from partners/husbands in childcare;
- Lack/limitation of self-determination / sense of objectification;
- Problems with combining maternal and employee roles;
- Longing for the “old life,” “former self—before being a mother”;
- Difficult relationship with the child/children (e.g., in the case of an over-excitable child, a child who does not meet previous fantasies, expectations, etc.).

Pointing out the regret of motherhood, most women referred to the main (basic) negative emotions. In the statements of the women, there was especially sadness, anger (aggression), disillusionment, and

⁸ A more detailed description of the reasons behind regretting motherhood can be found in Garncarek (2019b).

its derivative—shame. Those emotions appeared in the context of the role of the mother, as well as in the context of the relationship of mothers with their own child/children. Women mentioned sadness especially in connection with the loss of previous life and their sense of subjectivity:

When my older son was born, I felt as if someone had taken everything from me, my whole world, my identity, work, activity, enthusiasm, and even the chair where I read books. I, ambitious, educated, able to do everything, suddenly shrank to the role of a nanny / washerwoman / housekeeper...I valued my independence, and I have nothing left...if I could go back in time... I would never decide to motherhood. [Kolejna smutna (Another sad) / blog mamwatpliwosc.pl (ihaveadoubt.pl)]

My life is no longer mine, the baby took everything from me. He didn't do it on purpose, but does that change anything? [forum Żałuję rodzicielstwa (I regret parenthood)]

In several statements, the way they function is compared by the mothers to prison conditions. Feelings of sadness appeared in connection with the lack of freedom of action, control over their lives, and dependence on others. Above all, their existence was filled by suffering and a sense of loneliness. The mothers were unable to find themselves in a new role, they could not cope with the burden and fatigue, they were not ready for many changes, sacrifices, and relinquishments:

Sad mothers hide their saber in the closet. They apologize for the extra pounds, like if they were to fuck-

ing explain themselves. Because of a bad dinner, as if anybody they're making it for were able or would try to make a better one. They ask permission to leave the house, as if it was a prison pass—each time organizing it as if they were going into space, and seeing it as something extraordinary... After a year they simply say, “He took care of the children, so I rested, I washed the floors and windows,” “I'm going for a walk to Biedronka” [Polish grocery store]. [Radomska / blog mamwatpliwosc.pl (ihaveadoubt.pl)]

The emotion of sadness (characterized by affective negativity) appeared not only in the statements of the discussants, but also manifested in their nicknames: “Sad mother,” “Another sad mother,” which can be interpreted in terms of building one's identity, that of a mother, based on the emotion of sadness. For some women, that emotion shaped the image of motherhood, constituting the essence of one's identity of a mother regretting her motherhood.

I'm done. It was said that it will get better with time, easier, when the children grow up and go to school. Bullshit. I'm very tired. With all the planning and organization on my mind. [Kolejna smutna (Another sad) / blog mamwatpliwosc.pl (ihaveadoubt.pl)]

Some mothers mentioned disappointment with their child, dislike of the child/children, and there were also a few statements from mothers who wrote that they never really loved their child and would gladly leave them, as well as their present life. However, they are held back by social pressure and a deeply internalized sense of moral obligation to take care of the progeny. What follows, it can be assumed that there are mothers who live with “ille-

gal feelings,” because not liking or not loving their child is far from the accepted pattern of femininity and motherhood in our culture. One of the participants emphasized:

I'm simply DISAPPOINTED with motherhood. That's not how I imagined it... That's not how I imagined my child, who embodies everything that I hate about children... Screaming 24/7 from the day she was born... and she is already several years old. I love her, but... I'm simply disappointed in her. I'll probably be stoned here, but I don't care. That's how I feel. [Smutna Matka (Sad mother) / blog mamwatpliwosc.pl (ihaveadoubt.pl)]

I allow myself to long for those times, the old me and my more carefree life, greater freedom, I allow myself to be angry, to be disappointed, to be lacking in strength—because motherhood is not as great as others want us to believe. It can give joy, it can give a sense of fulfillment, but I understand that it can also disappoint, and even take away the desire to live. [blog matkawygodna.pl (slackermom.pl)]

Before having children I thought I would be a fantastic mother. Energetic and full of ideas. Today I'm sad, I haven't hidden my sword yet, but the closet door is already open. What disappointed me the most was my partner, with his lack of support, or rather my roommate, because the only thing we have in common today is probably a shared flat. [Agnieszka / blog mamwatpliwosc.pl (ihaveadoubt.pl)]

Fulfilling the role of a mother in accordance with social expectations was the reason behind growing frustration, feeling dissatisfaction, and in some cases—articulating anger and pointing to aggressive

behaviors. Anger and aggression appeared both in the context of fulfilling the role of a mother, as well as in the context of mothers' relationship with their own child/children:

I'm pissed off by the daily rituals, cooking lunches, bathing, reading, and taking care of the baby in general. I have the feeling that my time flies through my fingers, because when I do what I have to do, I could be doing something else that would fascinate me. [Kasia / blog mamwatpliwosc.pl (ihaveadoubt.pl)]

Sometimes I sit down and cry from this powerlessness, sometimes I jerk the little one or yell at him all the time, and when it's very bad, I am even able to tell him how much I regret that I gave birth to him and how good it was without him. I'm sick of this tiredness and mess all around. [forum Żałuję rodzicielstwa (I regret parenthood)]

Interesting in the context of previous reflections on guilt and shame as the most important mechanisms of social control were the statements of women who admitted to the difficulty of accepting their negative emotions towards their children and/or of fulfilling a maternal role. As Turner (2009) points out, shame and guilt are secondary emotions, built on negative emotions such as sadness, regret, anger, aggression, disappointment. For a sociologist, secondary emotions, also called social emotions, are more interesting, since they are more susceptible to social impact, that is, they are socially constructed (Lewis and Haviland-Jones 2005:72-86). With reference to the cultural patterns of motherhood, those negative emotions are not associated with motherhood. It is rather associated with positive emotions and experiences.

Especially the image of the so-called good mother, in which patience, unconditional love, goodness, kindness, establishing a strong bond with the child (“being with the child”), putting the children’s needs before one’s own, sacrificing oneself for the children, coping (in addition, in a patient way) with the lack of sleep and time for oneself and one’s ambitions are important (Lupton and Fenwick 2001:1011).

An important aspect discussed here is the socio-cultural context of the statements of mothers. It also provides a framework for the interpretation of their utterances. Given the widespread (and established in the process of socialization) social belief in “the natural vocation” of women to motherhood (and their tendency to sacrifice, care for, and like unpaid work at home), this is an important reason for the appearance of a sense of guilt caused by the awareness of exceeding previously internalized norms. According to them, a “true/good” mother should be ashamed if she fails to meet social demands. Talking about the negative emotions associated with the role of a mother, articulating grief, sadness, and disappointment has been a challenge for some women taking part in discussions. Some asked themselves whether it was normal to feel negative emotions towards their own child. They expressed them using the keyboard, but some of them, sometimes already in the same entry, punished themselves for it:

I’m sick of my baby. Every day I have more remorse that I’m not the kind of mother I imagined I would be. [forum *Żałuję rodzicielstwa* (I regret parenthood)]

At times I don’t want to live and I really want to give him away somewhere, even though he’s my son. I’m

ashamed of that feeling, but I don’t have any more strength. [forum *Żałuję rodzicielstwa* (I regret parenthood)]

...most women remain silent, silent because of fear of social condemnation, because of fear of contemptible gazes. Trapped somewhere between what they feel and what they are expected to feel, they become more and more unhappy. It is easier for them to throw a plate against the wall when they are alone and feel powerlessness and helplessness than to admit to their immediate surroundings that they are tired, powerless, or disappointed in being a mother. [blog *matkawygodna.pl* (*slackermom.pl*)]

Conclusions

The analysis of the Internet discourse on motherhood made it possible to identify the problem of regretting motherhood, which has thus far been poorly present in Polish public discourse, as well as in sociology. In the vast majority of the analyzed statements, women expressed negative emotions connected with their role. Motherhood was described in terms of constant hardship and struggle with one another, with one’s own emotions, such as regret, sadness, disappointment, and anger, which some of the participants found difficult to admit in the context of their role as mothers. They indicated not only a struggle with oneself, sometimes also with one’s own child and/or the father of the child who was “absent” in the process of upbringing. The women wrote about the problem of giving up on themselves and their previous lives. There was also a certain “suspension” of women between traditional and modern gender models. On the one

hand, there was a rebellion against the situation / struggle against the traditional understanding of the role of the mother, and, on the other hand, it was pacified by the sense of duty to be a good mother, internalized in the socialization process. They were held back by social pressure and a deeply internalized sense of moral obligation to care for one's child/children, a perpetual tendency to sacrifice oneself, to work unpaid at home, and a particular sensitivity and readiness to meet the needs, first of all—of other people, and then one's own.

In the common sense, regretting motherhood is still seen as impossible by definition, is stigmatized, and is considered a taboo. However, the statements made on the Internet forums and blogs show more and more voices of women who admit that they do not like taking care of their children or regret becoming mothers. The experiences of modern mothers are to varying degrees consistent with the pattern of be-

havior expected by society. Their personal experiences are varied and show many faces of motherhood. It is perceived by women not only positively, as it is often associated with the feeling of a number of negative emotions. Nowadays, especially thanks to the Internet—blogs and forums—they can articulate those emotions. With their voice, however, they contribute to violating the cultural taboo associated with the role of a mother.

This article does not exhaust all of the possibilities of analyzing the collected research material and does not present the whole interpretation of the problem, but it outlines the socio-cultural conditions of the ways of expressing emotions and feelings in the context of regretting motherhood. It points out the main emotions (and their sources) that occur in the case of regretting motherhood, and is an inducement to further in-depth analysis of the problem.

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Dealing with Feeling: Emotion, Affect, and the Qualitative Research Encounter

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Abstract Emotion and affect are different, yet intricately interwoven. Emotions such as fear, joy, or sadness are biological in as far as they are physically *felt*, but they are relational in as far as they are more fully *experienced*. Affect arises out of the relational quality of emotion—it consists of the myriad ways in which emotions are embodied, expressed, and enacted.

Emotion and affect are influenced by their physical and symbolic contexts. In terms of physical context, data for this article were collected from two different research studies and several sites in the Free State Province of South Africa. Two forms of data were collected: verbal data and images/artworks. In terms of symbolic context, these verbal and visual forms of language and their functioning were explored to generate insights on the social construction of emotion and affect.

Margaret Wetherell's work provides a theoretical basis for analyzing emotion and affect. Rather than conceptualizing emotion in terms of obscure or esoteric formulations, her "practice-based" approach grounds the study of emotion by examining its manifestation in actions. When taken together, action and practice imply pattern and order, form and function, process and consequence.

Both projects featured in this paper are sensitive studies that stir emotion. This is fertile ground for exploring emotion and affect in participants' narratives. It is also fertile ground for exploring how emotion and affect may influence the qualitative researcher and the research process itself. Accordingly, this paper offers an additional layer of analysis on the functioning of intersubjectivity, power, emotion, and affect in the research encounter. Concluding insights endorse the practice of mindfulness as a fruitful approach to manage researcher subjectivity in the qualitative research encounter.

Keywords Emotion; Affect; Affective Practice; Interpretative Repertoires; Qualitative Research Encounter; Researcher Subjectivity; Intersubjectivity; Power; Mindfulness

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Distinguishing Emotion and Affect

Historically, the study of feeling/emotion, affect, and mood has been mainly in the fields of psychobiology and psychology. But, over the last decade interest in these issues has spread more widely throughout the social sciences. The work of the sociologist Thomas J. Scheff (1990; 2000) focuses, for instance, on the role of specific emotions such as pride and shame in establishing and preserving, or threatening and breaking, social bonds. With the spotlight more keenly focused on *social* aspects of emotion, affect, and mood, traditional ways of thinking about them have given way to more diverse analyses. One significant shift is away from “essentialist notions of emotion as located solely in individual biology” (McGrath, Mullarkey, and Reavey 2020:75). Instead, social scientists now accept that emotion is also relational and is interwoven with language and context (Willis and Cromby 2020). This paper follows that trend, and is based on the understanding that emotions are biological in as far as they are physically *felt*, but that they are relational in terms of how they are *experienced*. Out of this relational quality—at the confluence of self, other, and context—arises affect: the myriad ways in which emotions are embodied, expressed, and enacted. Thus, while the body remains central to emotion, it is the body-in-the-world that is central to affect.

How Affect Functions

Margaret Wetherell (2012:4), whose work forms the theoretical basis of this article, refers to affect as “embodied meaning making.” She contends that affect is “always ‘turned on’ and ‘simmering,’ moving along, since social action is continually embodied” (Wetherell 2012:12). From this perspective, emotion and affect cannot be excluded from any human encounter, including the research encounter.

More intricately, she argues that affect is a *practical* human activity (Wetherell 1998; 2012; 2015; Wetherell, McConville, and McCreanor 2020). The notions of “practical” and “practice” imply purpose and intent. This is not to say that embodied meaning-making and affective practice are necessarily conscious. Rather, affective practice is often automatic and unbidden, typically implicating “a large, non-conscious, hinterland of associations, habits, ingrained relational patterns, and semiotic links” (Wetherell 2012:21). Clearly, sometimes we are not aware of what we are doing in-the-moment, instead “we only become conscious of how our bodies and minds have been recruited and entangled after the event” (Wetherell 2012:21).

This recruitment and entanglement is partly due to the repetition of individual, as well as social/com-

munal routines of surveillance and regulation—through which patterns of affective practice are constructed and become embedded “as a kind of potential” (Wetherell 2012:22).

Practice draws attention to both a transpersonal “ready-made” we confront and slip into, as well as to active and creative figuring. Routines do in some sense “land on” people and “subject” them. And, “forms of encounter,” or social relationships, arrive with the affective slots for actors already sketched...It is an organic complex in which all the parts relationally constitute each other. [Wetherell 2012:125]

From this we can deduce that emotion and affective practice are convoluted—almost byzantine—like the functioning of language with its relations of power, its underlying assumptions, and subtle triggers. Language—and more intricately, rules of discourse inherent in language—positions people differentially in relation to themselves, to others, and to their contexts. Similarly, emotion and affective practices position people in particular ways in relation to themselves, others, and the contexts in which they find themselves. For instance, a person could be positioned as “an angry person” in one context and point of view, but be positioned as “a victim with a right to be aggrieved” in a different context and point of view. The person and her/his affective practices have not changed. Rather, she/he is being differently positioned in two different contexts, according to two different discourses and their underlying values. Sometimes the values and assumptions that underlie emotions and affective practices are so entrenched that they become automatic. We are likely then to respond via “interpretative repertoires,”

which are “culturally familiar and habitual line[s] of argument comprised from recognizable themes, common places, and tropes (doxa¹)” (Wetherell 1998:394).

The Aims of This Paper

This paper has two main aims. The first is to analyze the social construction of emotion and affect as these unfold in qualitative data from two different research studies focused on social responses to HIV. In analyzing the social construction of reality, key theoretical anchors are illustrated, namely, subject positioning, affective practices, interpretive repertoires, and relations of power. The second aim is to reflect on the qualitative research encounters themselves, and transparently describe how emotion was experienced, and affect enacted, by the researcher herself. This serves as a basis for endorsing mindfulness as a fruitful approach to managing researcher subjectivity.

Methodological Notes

Data for this paper originate in two research studies. Both studies used quantitative and qualitative methods. This article draws on qualitative data collected directly from participants, as well as researchers’ field notes. The studies were selected because they both focus on social responses to HIV and both yielded rich data for exploring emotion and affect. For both studies I was a project leader and collected data in collaboration with a team of researchers, but in the qualitative research encounters featured here,

¹ Doxa refers to common beliefs or popular opinions.

I was the team member who personally collected the data. This personal involvement in data collection was another selection criterion as it enabled me to offer in-depth and well-grounded analyses of the research encounters and the emotions that I felt, as well as witnessed.

The first study was an evaluation of an Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) program run by a local non-governmental organization in the Free State Province of South Africa (Rau et al. 2014; Rau 2018). The OVC program is one of the organization's interventions designed to mitigate the negative effects of HIV among community members. Data were collected from organizational staff and beneficiaries of the program; the focus of this article is on insights from the children's data. Random sampling was used to control bias in the selection of children. The total population of 608 OVCs was stratified by gender, geographical cluster, and age, and then a list of 32 OVCs was randomly drawn. Children were reached in contact sessions lasting three hours per day for three consecutive days. These were held in the children's home languages—a mix of Sesotho and Setswana. Sessions were highly interactive and methods were participatory, consisting of writing and storytelling, as well as artworks in the form of drawings and decoupage. Verbal data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated. Artworks also constituted data, but were not included in analyses unless a child spoke about or explained her/his artwork. All research team members contributed data in the form of field notes on their insights and observations. Great care was taken to work sensitively with the children and to this end a qualified psychologist fluent in Sesotho, Setswana, and En-

glish was recruited to the project team. She led all the children's sessions and contributed to the design of activities, as well as to thematic and psychological analyses. She also supported and debriefed the researchers.

The second study was a randomized controlled trial on HIV- and TB (Tuberculosis)-stigma among health-care workers across public hospitals in the Free State Province (Rau et al. 2018). All eight provincial hospitals were stratified by size and district, and then randomly allocated to four control and four intervention sites. In the latter sites, a key intervention was a 1-day stigma-reduction training workshop for health-care workers from all levels and types of jobs. In keeping with the theory of Diffusion of Innovations, positional sampling (Rau et al. 2018:6) and snowball sampling were used to select the 402 participants who attended the training sessions in the intervention sites. In order to better understand how interventions were engaged with and received we conducted 26 focus group discussions among 114 health-care workers. Focus groups lasted between 40 to 60 minutes and were conducted in Sesotho and English. Data were transcribed, translated if necessary, and entered into nVivo12© prior to thematic analysis. Researchers also contributed insights and field notes that were discussed in debriefing sessions at the end of every data collection day.

Signed consent, and assent in the case of the children, were obtained from all participants for all activities in which they were involved. Formal ethical clearance was obtained for both studies. *Study 1:* University of the Free State, Faculty of Education,

Research Ethics Committee (Clearance no.: UFS-EDU-2013-043, dd. July 30, 2013). *Study 2*: University of the Free State, Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee: Institutional Review Board (IRB) number 00006240 (Clearance reference number ECUFS 55/2015, dated 16 September 2015, and 7 December 2016).

Objectivity, Subjectivity, and Intersubjectivity in the Research Encounter

A key consideration for all research—including sensitive studies that stir emotion, like the research featured here—is the degree to which researchers knowingly or unknowingly wield power in relation to participants and the research context. This has implications for how, and how much, researchers influence the content and quality of research and data. Efforts to counteract researcher influence on research processes and participants aim to cultivate an appropriate degree of objectivity.

Qualitative research has long abandoned the quest for absolute objectivity, as reified in quantitative paradigms. Instead, qualitative researchers are instructed, in research texts we consult from very early on in our academic training, to maintain as neutral as possible a stance in relation to participants, what they say or do, and the contexts in which the research takes place. These instructions are many and varied, ranging from how we communicate verbally and non-verbally with participants, to how much of ourselves we should try to leave “outside” the research encounter. For instance, a recommended practice and attitude for interpretative-phenomenology is “bracketing” (Brooke 1991), which urges

researchers to suspend prior knowledge, preconceived ideas, and personal proclivities. In practice, cultivating conceptual silence is difficult, if not close to impossible. Another recommendation is the practice of reflexivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). But, reflexivity requires time and introspection, neither of which are readily available in-the-moment of a research encounter.

I argue here (and later discuss) that it is best to be *fully present* in the research encounter, and that this is more in keeping with the notion that there exists “an intrinsic, irreducible, and mutually transformative relationship” (Brooke 1991:7) between the researchers and their subject matter, their participants, and research contexts. Being fully present does not mean that there is no limit to how, or how much, the personal enters the professional. Rather, it is a matter of being oneself, while managing one’s subjectivity in order to make space for the real work, which is to concentrate on the research and its participants. Inevitably, research that involves directly engaging with people makes the research encounter *intersubjective* (Coetzee and Rau 2009). This is consistent with the epistemologies and methodologies of interpretivist, constructivist, and critical research discourses, which promote the idea that the research encounter is a co-constructed reality.

Insights and Findings

The Social Construction of Emotion and Affect

Maintaining neutrality to the research context is one of the desiderata that qualitative researchers should aim to achieve. Imagine then going

into a poor black South African township in order to evaluate a program for children orphaned and made vulnerable through HIV and AIDS. In a very real sense, you are primed for witnessing and working with difficulty and suffering. So the whole research context is highly charged, emotionally, even before directly encountering the children. Wetherell (2012:125) speaks of “a transpersonal ‘ready-made’ we confront and slip into... Routines do in some sense ‘land on’ people and ‘subject’ them. And ‘forms of encounter’ or social relationships arrive with the affective slots for actors already sketched.” On reflection it is possible to identify several “transpersonal ‘ready-made’... affective slots” (Wetherell 2012:125) that I and other team members slipped into. Emotions of pity, alarm, and sadness arose in the context of a socially constructed view of orphans and vulnerable children as being needy and powerless. “This view circulates so widely throughout the world that it has become a stereotype—a taken-for-granted construct that is so entrenched in collective understanding that we rarely question the assumptions on which it is based” (Rau 2018:10). By tracking my own emotions of pity, alarm, sadness, and even helplessness that emerged automatically out of this globally entrenched stereotype, it becomes possible to identify the forms of *emotional practice*—the *affects*—that result.

One affective practice was “saving behavior.” The research team did not arrive empty handed in what we knew to be an impoverished environment. At the start of every session, children were fed. They were also given a pack with all the materials needed to write or make artworks. During our first session

with a group of younger children the project psychologist and I discovered that food and materials had disappeared from the extra stock we always brought to sessions in case more than the invited number of children arrived. Clearly these commodities had been pinched during the session. My feelings of pity, alarm, and sadness for the children translated into reluctance on my part to say anything. Not doing or saying anything was a way to keep the research process on track, and not disturb the children’s early acceptance of me. But, it was also my way of trying to save them from feeling disgrace or shame. As Scheff (2000) notes, when someone threatens or breaks a social bond, this can lead to a negative self-evaluation, and more particularly, to feelings of shame. In a process not unlike negative transference,² my passivity and feelings of helplessness repeated the widely shared normative notion of “passive, helpless orphans.”

Interestingly, the affective practice of “saving behavior” was also manifested by the children, although in a very different sense and way. One boy, like several others, cut pictures out of magazines and stuck them on art paper, adding multi-colored sketches, and a short written piece on his experience of the organization. What set him apart was that he did not use any materials from the pack we gave him. He borrowed everything he needed—scissors, glue, pencil, pen, color markers, even paper—from the packs given to the other children. The other children let him use their materials without any verbal agreement and also without any visible reluctance.

² Transference describes a situation where the feelings, desires, and expectations of one person are redirected and applied to another person.

When the activity had ended the psychologist asked him why he did not use his own materials. He replied:

It is for my brother and sister. They do not have pencils. They do not come here.

The other children “saved” him, so that he could “save” his siblings. They clearly intuited, recognized, or perhaps even identified with his need. In a sense, their affective action served to discontinue and interrupt poverty, like “poor philanthropists” (Wilkinson-Maposa et al. 2005) who help each other despite having very little themselves in terms of material resources. One could argue that the children’s response is one of the “intimate ways in which affect is linked to convention and normal practice” (Wetherell 2012:93) in impoverished communities. This fits well with the notion of the social construction of reality, makes good sense in terms of social science, and I accept it as a valid interpretation.

Nonetheless, it is not entirely satisfying to my “subjective self” whose direct and intense emotional encounter with the sweet solidarity of the children makes me wonder if generosity may involve a more transcendental way of being-in-the-world than is captured in the idea of the social construction of reality, or for that matter Wetherell’s notion of affective practice. For some readers this highly subjective interpretation, with its almost mystical overtones, may signal a lapse in critical thinking. I include it here to show how, in that particular interaction with the children, my emotional *feelings* positioned me differently in relation to different ways of thinking

about generosity: the academic discourse of “the poor philanthropist” *versus* the mystical discourse of “a state of grace.” It also shows how objectivity can reside alongside subjectivity in the research encounter. Undeniably, emotions in this encounter opened my mind to different interpretations. Irrespective of the merits of the two different interpretations, an open mind is a very important quality for a qualitative researcher to cultivate. Thus, I argue that suppressing emotion in the qualitative encounter is counterproductive and that it is better to be “fully present.” Of course, in choosing which interpretation to put forward visibly/publicly, we usually follow the normative expectations of the context in which we are operating.

The Power of Images to Evoke Emotion

The tactic of using art-making, sound, images, and film to evoke feelings is not new in qualitative research, which has long recognized that “like all embodied experiences, emotions and feelings are ineffable: not capable of being wholly represented using words” (Willis and Cromby 2020:3). Talking about feeling also uses imagery in the form of similes and metaphors that capture the essence of an experience. In response to the request to tell us something about their home and families, one child conjured a clear emotive image when he said:

I do not like my family because they treat me like a dog.

Another little girl also used the image of a dog: from one of the magazines we supplied she cut out a picture of a Labrador snuggled into a bright

red new cushion. He wore a doggy jacket and had a bling collar around his neck. His tongue was lolling out in a show of happiness that matched the warmth in his eyes. When asked about her image she did not want to speak. All sorts of interpretations ran through my head. Could she be saying her home and family is a warm, happy, and safe space where she is well cared for? Could it be wishful thinking? Was she reacting to the child who said he felt treated like a dog? More simply, did she want a dog? It is vitally important that participants unpack the meaning of their artworks, images, or metaphors, not researchers. Any probing needs to be done with great care because participants, especially young children, are prone to suggestion and may wish to please or comply with what they think researchers want to hear. In this project, researchers never pushed past a child's reluctance to speak. As a result, quite a lot of potentially rich data were lost to us.

Many of the children's drawings and decoupage artworks featured desirable things like cell phones, cars, and clothing, but some illustrated deep emotional desires. One little girl cut out an image of a man kneeling in meadow grass; his arms were draped around the shoulders of a young girl and boy, pulling them all closely together—a tightly knit group of smiling faces. The group looked decidedly Nordic or Aryan, while the child who made the artwork is African. It seems that, for her, the appeal of the image transcended racial associations. The man and children in the image all wore the same uniform, like a scout group. The child had drawn a frame of flowers and hearts around the picture and added the name of the organization, along with a title: "It

is father." This particular child was an orphan and the household of extended family in which she lived comprised of women only. The child care workers at the organization were also all women. The image in context was touching and quite disturbing—and remains so years later. Encounters like this emphasize the importance of recruiting a psychologist to a research team working in a sensitive and emotionally charged context. They also show how, for researcher and researched, "affective flows can get tied up/connected by / entangled with images" (Wetherell 2012:13).

Another interesting drawing was of a man smoking a long cylindrical pipe, with the caption "Don't try this." The boy who drew it explained:

When I first came here I was smoking glue.

Many South African townships, like the one in which the organization is situated, have high levels of crime, violence, and substance abuse, all of which contribute to unsavory and unsafe environments for families and children (Hall et al. 2018). Keeping his eyes on his artwork, the boy spoke of a turnaround in his situation, which he attributed to the interventions of the organization:

I like [this place]. It protects us when it is raining; it makes sure the thugs are not beating us up.

There are a lot of things I learned from [this organization]—like one has to have a bright future and not be attracted by gangsters. Because once you end up being a gangster...you have a lot of things that make you lose sense of yourself.

In other sessions this child was very reserved. It is doubtful that in this session we would have solicited this depth of revelation without his drawing. In relation to this child's artwork, and the others discussed here, I concur with Radley and Taylor (2003 as cited in Willis and Cromby 2020:9) who find that using art-work and images to solicit narratives "offers more agency to participants, giving them greater freedom from researcher designed prompts, and...facilitating the 'feeling again' of the experiences to which [the images] relate."

Communal Dimensions of Emotion and Affect

Stigma is a Greek word for a mark that was cut or burned into the skin—it identified people as criminals, slaves, or traitors to be shunned. In his seminal work, Erving Goffman (1963) drew on this age-old notion to define stigma as an attribute, quality, or association that significantly discredits an individual in the eyes of others. [Rau et al. 2018:2]

More recent scholarship places emphasis on stigma as a *process* involving differentiation, othering, and discrimination (Rau et al. 2018:2). Stigma can be overt or covert, perceived or enacted, private or public. In all its various forms and processes, one quality of stigma stands out: it is emotionally fraught. This was demonstrated in qualitative data collection for the second research study featured here, on HIV- and TB (Tuberculosis)-stigma among health-care workers in public health-care facilities. Stigma operates through circular processes that reinforce and amplify it. It can also be interrupted, which is what our research aimed to do via training to increase health-care workers' knowledge of stigma, and also

to evoke in them what it feels like to stigmatize or be stigmatized. As Wetherell (2012:143) notes: "the fact that affect does circulate, and that affective practice can be communal, is crucial to the very possibility of collective action and to sociality and polity."

Let me begin with an example of communal affect experienced by a participant who called me aside after a focus group ended to tell me a personal story about being stigmatized because she works closely with HIV-infected patients. This phenomenon is known as stigma-by-association. Almost every morning she would wake up to find empty antiretroviral (ARV) medication bottles in her yard. They had obviously been thrown over her fence during the night. The regularity with which this occurred left her in no doubt that community members were involved.

What are they trying to say to me? It's upsetting. I am a professional nurse, helping people with HIV to live...people right there, in my community.

Stigma-by-association connects with Wetherell's (2012:81) idea of "circuits of affective value." HIV is one of the most feared infections in South Africa, the country with the biggest HIV epidemic in the world (Statistics South Africa 2018). People with HIV or who are associated with HIV are often stigmatized, particularly in communities where HIV is most prevalent. A strong driver of stigmatization is fear of contagion, which gives rise to a wide range of negative affective practices such as shaming, blaming, discrimination, avoidance, exclusion, degradation, even outright hostility. To be closely associated with the virus, or someone infected with it, carries the risk of attracting these negative effects to one's

self. Some might find it better/safer to reproduce, or at least appear to reproduce, the negative affective practices that circulate in a community and that most community members appear to buy into. This creates “circuits of affective value” that become ever more deeply entrenched through repetition.

The second example is from a nurse in a different hospital. Three factors distinguished her narrative. Firstly, she was most outspoken about her personal experience of being stigmatized in the workplace. This was quite unusual and transgressed what I had come to recognize from preceding groups as a kind of “closing of the ranks” against researchers who come from outside the organization, and whose gaze is on something as negative as stigma perpetrated among the healthcare workers themselves. Secondly, stigma was initially enacted at the communal level, and then it changed form and direction to impact on one individual. Thirdly, the nurse’s narrative was of stigma rooted in feelings of fear and antipathy towards “the other,” in this case enacted stigma based on ethnic difference.

They team up against me...it’s a large number of people talking the same language.

[I said] I’m not going to fight you. You can continue doing that if it is giving you comfort.

Then they resorted to another person to team up against...who is [also] not a Tswana person.

She lowered her head and her mouth was trembling as she described how stigma against her escalated after she stood up for the rights of a patient:

A senior personnel...she is my junior when I am counting the age...but with the position she’s there as a senior...she was very angry about that [about the nurse standing up for a patient].

Anger, the anger she’s having, she’s displaying the anger on me. Always and always when she’s there, in the unit, she’s playing her anger. I made her aware that I’m not responsible for her anger.

[Then when it came to the time for] performance appraisals...I disagree with the information. She’s becoming annoyed when I disagree [and] I don’t want to sign...Then she’s holding my hand, like this, and twisting my arm. This arm [holding it] is still having a problem.

She reported the incident and attended management meetings held to try to arbitrate the impasse, but neither led to the removal of the senior who attacked her emotionally, then physically.

I used to cry every day at work, but now I’ll never cry again.

I resorted to another behavior, which I was not having it previously, of revenge.

I’m displaying an up-to-date defense mechanism against them. Effectively so. I make it a point that I don’t misbehave. I do my job. I’ll do the correct things, always and always...my only problem is that of arriving late at work.

Relations of power are revealed in the ways in which a person is positioned by others—in this case, the

stigmatization of the nurse based on ethnic difference, which then plays out in affective (angry and violent) practices of discrimination. Relations of power are also revealed in the way a person positions herself/himself: it refers to a person's speaking standpoint and the character she/he knowingly or unknowingly projects. As Edwards (2005 as cited in Wetherell 2012:92) notes, "people are attentive to how they will be heard and evaluated, and will try to avoid any potentially noxious identities, while claiming normatively positive positions." In her narrative, the nurse presents as a victim, but also as a moral judge and accuser. She describes how her affective practice changes from always crying, to defending herself by always doing what is correct. A chink in this armor appears when she starts arriving late for work. By this admission she avoids projecting herself as being perfect. Listeners are likely to excuse this one flaw, perhaps even understand it as being an unconscious expression of not wanting to be in such an inhospitable environment. It is likely that I was not the only one who felt emotion listening to the nurse's story and watching her struggle to keep back her tears, for emotion in one person usually precipitates emotion in others. Her story, and the way she positions herself within it, sets up "ready-made" emotional slots for listeners to take up or slip into: sympathy towards her and indignation at the acts of her aggressors.

Two difficulties for the qualitative researcher arise out of this encounter. Firstly, it was not possible to solicit accounts of the nurse's situation from anyone else in the hospital, because it would have been a breach of confidentiality. An Occupational Health nurse attended the focus group, as well as a staff

member from Human Resources: it is very unlikely that they would have remained silent if the story was not well-founded. One man in the focus group said that he had heard about it, but did not elaborate further, except to comment that it showed there were other forms of stigma that do not have to do with HIV. A situation like this can be problematic for any qualitative researcher, who needs to gather multiple perspectives on an issue in order to expand or validate an account.

Secondly, the nurse took up a lot of the allotted time speaking about a form of stigma that was not the focus of the research. Normally, I would have found a way to bring the discussion back to HIV- and TB-stigma, or shift her into a private interview with the co-facilitator. But, her story came tumbling out so rapidly and relentlessly, and the way in which the stigma against her mutated into acts of workplace discrimination was clearly so painful for her that it would have been brutal, and, importantly, in terms of African culture—rude, to interrupt her.

For quite a while after the nurse had finished telling her story the atmosphere in the group was uncomfortable and it took some prompting to get people to speak again. I wonder whether there might have been some collective alarm, perhaps even collective shame (Scheff 1990; 2000), at the nurse having breached normative rules of the workplace, which have to do with maintaining an ethic of neutral professionalism by not openly discussing or showing distress, as well as not telling outsiders about inequitable workplace practices such as discrimination or breaches in patient care.

Emotion as a Catalyst for Change

Wetherell (1998:394) coined the term “interpretative repertoires” for “culturally familiar and habitual line[s] of argument comprised from recognizable themes, common places, and tropes.” The functioning of different forms of stigma against people with HIV is driven partly by emotions and affective practices that make use of interpretative repertoires and establish “affective routines that spill over into present and future affect” (Wetherell 2012:151).

“Refiguring,” according to Despret (2004:209), is “a moment of hesitation in emotion when it is possible to launch body and mind on new alternative trajectories and choose other forms of becoming.” A key aim of our hospital project’s stigma-reduction training was to bring about just such a moment.

One male health-care worker shared what I regard as a heroic narrative. It took a few shakings of his head and murmurings of reluctance before he decided to speak. We all waited. Then he spoke softly:

There is this man in my section. I was stigmatizing him.

After the training I went to speak to him, to say I now have knowledge. That I accept him. That I was wrong. And we have become friends here.

I regard this as a heroic narrative, because he took full ownership of his story and he told it even though it was a source of embarrassment for him. Several participants spoke of witnessing or hearing about HIV/TB-stigma among health-care workers

in the workplace. But, outside the guaranteed anonymity of the quantitative-survey component of the research, he was the only one out of 114 participants who openly admitted to having habitually stigmatized an HIV-infected co-worker.

Mindfulness and the Subjective Self

Subjectivity is not singular. As Wetherell (2012:125) puts it, “subjectivities arise in the plural, in shifting and patterned, often clashing, ensembles.” Writing about the researcher’s self in research Margaret Walshaw (2010:589) concurs: “Subjectivity is not a simple given presumed essence that naturally unfolds, but, rather, is produced in an ongoing process and through a range of influences, practices, experiences, and relations.” Qualitative research participants select from their experiences when choosing which stories to tell and how to tell them. Knowingly or unknowingly, they also solicit the researcher into taking up a particular position or “side.” In response, the researcher is bound to find that different subjectivities arise consciously or unconsciously within herself/himself.

Symbolically and realistically, emotive research contexts can pose difficulties in managing appropriately boundaried relationships. For instance, the children would touch my hair and fiddle with my clothing, but I could not reciprocate by touching them (many were abused and so touching is taboo). They would also affect all sorts of attention-seeking behaviors, which I sometimes found difficult to respond to kindly, but firmly (others might feel left out if attention was unevenly divided, and again this would risk re-creating a negative association

for orphans and vulnerable children). Particularly in highly emotive settings such as the projects discussed here, the idea of maintaining emotional neutrality is just not viable. Of course, as a researcher I could not cry with the nurse. Nor could I show children the pain I felt at some of their stories and artworks, for this would have taken away from the remarkable resilience that several showed.

One has to stay steady, but one also has to stay true. Inevitably, the qualitative research encounter is intersubjective (Coetzee and Rau 2009). So whether as a researcher you adopt a “persona” or present as your “natural self,” participants will register and respond to you. I argue that it is better to be natural: how else would it be possible to honestly reflect on and critically analyze your influence on the research encounter with any real depth, knowledge, or authority?

I regard the notion of “mindfulness” as best suited to the here-and-now of the qualitative research encounter. It has long been featured in Buddhist teachings as a way-of-being in the world, and has been taken up more recently in psychology texts and practices (cf. Lemon 2017). Mindfulness allows for the rising, the noting, and the letting-go of thoughts, emotions, and judgments. This seems to me to be preferable to trying to banish emotions and judgments as intrusions into the research encounter. Mindfulness offers a space in which the researcher is fully and fallibly human—hospitable to her/his own self, as well as the personhood of participants. This is the place I have reached after many, many years as a researcher. I find that being “real” in the research encounter minimizes the distance between participants and myself. It

also provides a space for scientific thinking to operate in tandem with ordinary human awareness. In this space, emotions are not something undesirable to be suppressed, but natural and allowable phenomena to be worked with.

In Summary

This article illustrates key processes and products/consequences involved in the social construction of emotion and affect. This is done via analyses of qualitative data collected in two studies on social responses to HIV, and via insights on how the researcher’s own emotion and affect are triggered and operate in qualitative research encounters from the two studies. Two types of data were presented: verbal data and artworks. The latter were included to show how effectively images capture the emotion of participants who may not be able to articulate what they feel and do in words—in this case, the experience of children. All data and their analyses show how key theoretical anchors in the social construction of emotion and affect operate, particularly subject positioning, affective practices, interpretative repertoires, and relations of power.

Margaret Wetherell’s “practice-based” approach to emotion and affect is applied throughout this paper. Her approach is key in grounding the study of emotion and affect in real-life contexts and rendering them visible. Her ideas complement those on which the notion of the social construction of reality is based.

The research encounter itself is not a natural social reality, but a constructed one. I offer transparent de-

scriptions and insights on how I interpret my influence as a researcher on the research, and vice versa—the influence of the research on my emotion and affect. Having found injunctions to maintain neutrality towards participants and research contexts

difficult to practice, I offer readers an alternative that is hospitable to the fully-human and -fallible researcher and that allows scientific mind to operate in tandem with ordinary human awareness: the practice of mindfulness.

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Emotional Education Discourses: Between Developing Competences and Deepening Emotional (Co-)Understanding

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Abstract The article addresses an issue important in educational sciences which is emotional education understood as an activity for human emotional development. It is important in the context of lifelong learning, that is, both for the functioning of children and young people at school and for the lifelong learning of adults. Emotional education plays a significant role in the development of pro-social attitudes, the functioning of individuals in the local community, and in the building of civil society. Owing to the fact that the objectives of education and the principles of their implementation in educational practice are based on different theoretical assumptions, two different approaches to emotional education were distinguished, that is, technological-instrumental and humanistic-critical. There are clear and significant differences between those two perspectives, and not only in the way they conceptualize and explain “emotional education.” The two singled out approaches have consequences for educational policy and pedagogical practice. The aim of the article is to characterize both of the theoretical perspectives at hand and to indicate their implications for pedagogical activities.

Keywords Education; Discourse; Technological-Instrumental Education; Humanistic-Critical Education; Emotional Education; Emotional Competences

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The relationships between emotions and education constitute an expanding area of research in social sciences. Over the past two decades, numerous analyses have been conducted in the fields of pedagogy, psychology, sociology, or anthropology regarding the importance of emotions for learning processes. The emotional dimension of educational processes is emphasized above all by representatives of socio-cultural learning theories, for example, by Peter Alheit, Knud Illeris, Jack Me-

zirow, or Peter Jarvis, who increasingly emphasize that learning can occur in cognitive, emotional, and action spheres, and that it can be rational and intuitive, and even irrational (Jarvis 2012:134). Knud Illeris (2006:81) says that “cognition is always affectively labeled: there are always some emotional traces and components associated with the knowledge we develop. The stronger the emotions present in a learning situation are, the greater the emotional labeling of learning will be.”

When addressing the issue of emotional aspects of education, it is also worth noting that in recent decades the activity of educational institutions has been clearly violated by the neoliberal order (Potulicka and Rutkowiak 2010), which consists in dominating education by free-market economics not subject to social control, where “education is situated in a strange space having, on the one hand, the ambition to support individual development and being a common good and, on the other hand, becoming a mere commodity” (Potulicka 2010:103). Those commodification processes concern all aspects of human life, including emotional life (Szahaj 2013:134), they have begun to cross acceptable borders, and are both demoralizing and disastrous. Today, we are raising a society which consists of narcissistic individuals focused on their own success in life. We are less and less capable of cooperating with and trusting one another; as Andrzej Szahaj (2012) says, we live in a “culture of humiliation,” in a world of social inequality, where we are exposed to mechanisms that we do not understand, which we do not control, and which we are afraid of. In this situation, questions about emotional education seem to be one of the most important pedagogical issues.

Owing to the fact that relationships between emotions and education are multi-faceted and very complex, it is impossible to define emotional education, its objectives and tasks, without referring to the ontological and epistemological perspective adopted. In pedagogical sciences, we find numerous answers to questions about the aims of education and upbringing, and the principles of their implementation. Hence, the various proposals for pluralistic approaches and typologies, which are specific “maps” of educational discourses. Those include teaching orientations presented by Stefan Mieszalski (2010), or teaching styles proposed by Gary Fenstermacher and Jonas Soltis (2000). Owing to the embedding of the considerations in this article in the field of teaching, I refer to the discourses distinguished in the theory of education (Klus-Stańska 2018). With reference to the above classifications, I distinguish two discourses on emotional education, that is, technological-instrumental and humanistic-critical. At the same time, I understand public educational discourses, after Zbigniew Kwieciński (2019), as some relatively durable collections of meanings organizing the language of statements and debates in public stances and discussions expressed both in direct contacts between people and, indirectly, through the press, books, the media of mass communication, social media, and concerning, directly or incidentally, the issues of upbringing, education, teaching, and the system of education.

The purpose of this article is to characterize the singled out discourses of emotional education, that is, technological-instrumental and humanistic-critical. There are clear and significant differences between them in the way we understand emotional

education. This results primarily from referring to different theoretical assumptions, both within the objectives and principles of upbringing (education), as well as the issues of defining and understanding human emotions.

Emotional Education in Technological-Instrumental Terms

This discourse is based on the oldest and most influential vision of education, in which the basic mission of educational institutions is the transfer of objective knowledge and coding it in the minds of students. The education process is implemented on the basis of curricula prepared by experts, in which the content of education is important from the perspective of preparation for effective action. Education, which consists of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, as well as of competences that contribute to the better, more effective performance of social roles, is a result of pedagogical activity.

It is technologically oriented and instrumental education in the sense that it puts in the center a teacher technologist who “equips” learners with knowledge (which enjoys the feature of objectivity here), develops skills and competences, and the most important question the teacher faces is what methods, techniques, and means are the most effective in teaching. That approach permeates the entire system of school education and sees the teacher as a relentless seeker of teaching recipes for educational success.

From this perspective, emotional education is the development of emotional and social competenc-

es, which are a condition for the personal and professional development of the individual, and are also an important factor for achieving success in the personal, social, and professional spheres. Emotional competences are important both from the perspective of the functioning of children and young people at school and of adults in their workplace. For they provide an opportunity to use (manage) emotions in such a way that helps them to function better in their personal lives and contributes to their more effective and efficient functioning in society.

The concept of emotional competence has been developed most comprehensively by Carolyn Saarni (1999a; 1999b; 2005), who bases the structure of emotional competence on sociological theories. Saarni claims that human skills that make up emotional competences make it possible to effectively regulate one’s emotional experiences and enable proper interpersonal exchange; Saarni (1999b) treats them as skills owing to which the individual is effective in various social transactions involving emotions. At the same time, being effective is understood here as one’s belief in having skills in that field and the belief that one is able to achieve the objective. Saarni strongly emphasizes that emotional competences are both a consequence and a condition of participation in culture. Being emotionally competent means to actively participate in social life. People with a high level of emotional competences are more flexible, capable of controlling their actions, thoughts, and feelings in accordance with the cultural context. They also show greater self-confidence, are individuals—as Saarni puts it—who respect themselves, but also respect the emotion-

al experiences of others. Saarni lists the following skills that make up emotional competences¹:

- awareness of one's own emotional states,
- ability to notice and differentiate emotions experienced by others,
- ability to use appropriate verbal expressions to describe emotions common to a given culture,
- ability to express emotional experiences using symbols,
- ability to empathically engage in the emotional experiences of others,
- ability to differentiate emotional states and understand the lack of correspondence between an internal emotional state and its external expression,
- awareness of cultural rules and emotional norms and standards (knowledge about where, with whom, and how to express one's own emotions),
- ability to take into account information about the interactional partner in order to understand the emotions experienced by him or her,
- understanding that behaviors during which we express our emotions affect others,
- ability to adaptively cope with aversive or unpleasant emotions,
- knowledge that the nature of interpersonal relationships is determined by the degree of emotional directness and authenticity between the participants in interaction,
- sense of emotional effectiveness and agency (the ability to regulate one's own emotions and actions and perceive them as effective).

Carolyn Saarni's approach is slightly different from the well-known (and popular) concepts of emotional intelligence presented by Mayer and Salovey (1995), or by Daniel Goleman. For Saarni emphasizes that the social context plays a key role in the emotional functioning of individuals. Nevertheless, emotional competence is here, like in the case of emotional intelligence, a set of predispositions (knowledge and skills) thanks to which we function properly in various social situations, that is, those that trigger emotions and make it possible for us to regulate our emotional experiences and proper interpersonal exchange. According to Saarni, the process of emotional development is one of maturing and acquiring the skills that make up emotional competence. Those processes take place throughout the entire human life, from the birth of the child to the last moments of our lives; a continuous and complementary process of learning emotions is taking place, that is, the acquisition of emotionally labeled beliefs and, at the same time, learning how to express them. In that way, our emotional competences and beliefs about emotions coincide with the norms and standards current in a given culture.

¹ Emotional competences, their essence and structure, have been broadly characterized in Góralaska (2012).

Despite the fact that Carolyn Saarni's concept is rooted in cultural concepts, it is treated instrumentally as the adaptive potential of the subject. I refer hereby to the two meanings of competence distinguished by Astrid Męczkowska (2003). Competence is then a predisposition to effective action, directed at achieving an objective, its basic components being the knowledge, skills, and motivation to act, as well as convincing the subject of having that predisposition.

Emotional competences are an unequivocally positive resource. Hence, encouraging people (both children and adults) to improve the skills that make up emotional intelligence is an important element of management philosophy in many educational institutions and outside them (Goleman 1995). The development of those competences is a factor that facilitates one's professional career and improves functioning in various everyday situations. The results of research on the significance of emotional intelligence in human functioning (Maczak and Knopp 2013) confirm that emotionally intelligent people have greater social competences, function better in close interpersonal relationships, more often exhibit a secure attachment style, and use constructive strategies for dealing with conflicts. They have stronger self-esteem, sense of life, and the ability to influence their own fate, are more resistant to stress, and more often use a task-oriented style of coping with it. There is also evidence of a relationship between emotional intelligence and the effectiveness of school and professional functioning. According to Anna Maczak and Katarzyna Knopp (2013), emotionally intelligent people are more motivated to learn, are more satisfied with

their work, and are characterized by greater creativity.

Many researchers believe that emotional competences are subject to training. Its goal is to achieve such a level of competence which indicates that the effect of a performed action will be consistent with the assumed objectives. Emotional education in such approach is associated with development through the acquisition of emotional competences, while building emotional capital means the development of knowledge, skills, and competences which are the components of emotional competence. And because, as stated above, emotional competence is an important instrument supporting the development of an individual in many spheres of his or her life, and building emotional capital is a basic element contributing to the building of social and cultural capital, the training of emotional intelligence/competences has become an extremely popular marketing slogan. In response to the large interest in the education market, numerous programs, courses, and training sessions are created, the task of which is to raise the level of emotional competences and, thus, to improve the life situation of participants and, owing to this, guarantee them success in all areas of functioning and promote mental well-being.

Unfortunately, the research conducted in this field (mainly by psychologists) does not explicitly confirm the thesis about the effectiveness of courses and trainings aimed at developing emotional competences. Admittedly, there are (few) reports from studies on the effectiveness of emotional training. For example, Danuta Wosik-Kawala conducted empirical research among senior high school students,

in which she showed that (partly) positive results in developing emotional competences can be brought about by workshop classes organized at school. Her experiment proved that the classes caused an increase in the empathy and stress coping skills of the surveyed students, while the proposed educational classes did not significantly affect the change in respect of the respondents' assertive skills (Wosik-Kawala 2013). Also Katarzyna Knopp (2010) confirms that although there are very few studies verifying the effectiveness of courses and trainings, emotional intelligence subjects itself to learning processes and can be stimulated by introducing targeted educational interactions. Many researchers are skeptical about this issue owing to the fact that the effectiveness of such programs and trainings has not been confirmed by reliable scientific research, with some of them going so far as to claim that "those statements are based mostly on anecdotal messages or imprecisely described research" (Śmieja and Orzechowski 2008:36).

Emotional Education in Humanistic-Critical Terms

The most characteristic feature of this discourse is the assumption that the activities of educational institutions should move towards a change in the social world in accordance with the ideas of equality, social justice, emancipation (freedom, breaking free from enslavement), and empowerment (construed as acquiring the ability to act actively). What is clearly visible in the humanistic-critical discourse is the features of the so-called critical teaching, which, according to Dorota Klus-Stańska (2018), is characterized by:

- conscious political nature, which is expressed in the criticism of not only the policy implemented by educational authorities, but also in the criticism of promoted ideologies, norms and standards, systems of values that impose a system of meanings, and social structures, often violating the freedom of individual (teacher) and his or her basic rights;
- sociological theoretical orientation, which is expressed in the fact that we refer more often to sociological and economic sources, and less often to psychological ones;
- the unmasking nature of the school concept, which is revealed as "invalidating" the existing interpretations of the social world and educational practices;
- radicalism, which consists in postulating a profound change in school education that would be a tool and element of political change.

In this discourse, both the knowledge and emotional experiences of individual are understood differently, the goals of their development being also different. It is emphasized here that the individual learning cannot be considered in isolation from the social context or one's biography (Tedder and Biesta 2009), their common feature being to emphasize the importance of the socio-cultural space in which learning processes take place. In a wealth of extremely diverse educational spaces (formal and informal; real and virtual), individuals build their emotional experience, which goes far beyond their knowledge and skills, throughout their entire lives.

Emotions are seen here as deeply entangled in the education process, where not only individual and social aspects, but also the power relations current in educational institutions, are important to feel them: “emotions are created or constructed socially, meaning that what people feel is conditioned by their socialization in culture and participation in social structures” (Turner and Stets 2009:16). Emotions underlie the moral beliefs, attitudes, and practices of social life, are entangled in ideologies, social, economic, and political phenomena and, therefore, take a different form, that is, they manifest themselves differently in public space.

Humanistic-critical education is, therefore, not a game to gain knowledge or competences. It is something more, it is “an educational game for a better, more conscious, and subjective being in the world” (Malewski 2019:397), and the various forms of emotional education (both institutional and informal) are to make the development of reflective, critical (self-)consciousness possible.

Such an approach to emotional education was first presented by the Canadian education researcher, located in the mainstream of critical pedagogy, Megan Boler. It is worth noting that, according to Boler, emotions are not only ignored in educational practice, but also in the broadly understood theory of education. Boler’s research and analyses are groundbreaking in that they deal with the issues of relationships between emotions and education in a different, both epistemologically and methodologically innovative, context than it has been previously described. According to Boler, emotions are a place of socio-political control and, therefore, they cannot

be understood outside of culture and ideology. That means that experiencing emotions and working on emotions can be a tool of resistance to the norms and standards imposed and dominating in an (educational) institution. In the groundbreaking book under the title *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*, Boler (1999) analyzed schools from the perspective of how they discipline, suppress, and ignore emotions. Boler presents a number of arguments in favor of the thesis that educational institutions control emotions, thus sustaining various forms of social injustice (inequality). That control occurs owing to the fact that in each community there are certain hierarchies of power, norms, standards, practices, or rituals (and the so-called emotional rules related to them) that define and regulate who and in what form can express emotions. It is those rules that determine who is included in and who is excluded from a given community because of certain behaviors. The lack of response to the manifestations of injustice (inequality) in the school or class leads to a sense of powerlessness and, consequently, results in the fact that members of educational institutions are distanced from one another, isolate themselves, and are hostile to each other. As a consequence, that generates a number of negative emotions such as hostility, guilt, hatred, and anomie. Schools are a place where teachers humiliate and ridicule students, and violate their personal dignity and bodily integrity with impunity (Kopciewicz 2011). The lack of reaction to the manifestations of social injustice consequently leads to dehumanization and depersonalization in interpersonal relationships. In Polish schools, many teachers display, as Bogusław Śliwerski (2010:497) puts it, a submissive attitude, that is, they are those teachers who do not have

the courage to resist toxic phenomena and subjects. Most teachers do not have enough courage to bear witness to their values, because they could pay too high a price for it, that is, they could deprive themselves of professional awards, functions, and even jobs. Most teachers do not get involved in difficult or controversial matters.

Meanwhile, if, as critical pedagogy wants it, the basic task of education is to serve democracy, then the involvement in and the active taking of actions that reveal and expose hidden educational violence is one of basic pedagogical obligations. Boler is one of the first researchers not only to reveal those mechanisms of emergence of negative emotions in school, but goes even further, that is, her work is a “call to act.” In her opinion, discomfort can play a huge role in education and getting to know “difficult” issues such as racism, oppression, and social injustice. The theoretical proposition she developed, the so-called **pedagogy of discomfort** is a powerful pedagogical tool that makes it possible for teachers and students to use their discomfort to construct new emotional (co-)understandings. Boler proves that moving out of the “comfort zone” is to deconstruct the ways in which students and teachers have learned to feel, express their emotions, and to act. In other words, stepping outside of the comfort zone makes it possible to understand how emotions define what and how we want to see and, the other way round, how emotions contribute to the fact that we do not see (do not want to see) certain phenomena (Boler 1999:177).

From this point of view, the pedagogy of discomfort is a valuable pedagogical perspective (theory) serving to discover and challenge deeply embedded

social dimensions and emotional rules that form individual and group privileges through the daily habits, principles, and rituals of (educational) institutions and social groups. The pedagogy of discomfort is a valuable offer, providing students, teachers, and other people involved in the education process with the opportunity to think critically about the nature of their beliefs and about how they affect daily learning experiences and what they result in. From this perspective, the pedagogy of discomfort implements one of the basic assumptions of critical pedagogy (Giroux 2010) and the so-called transformative teaching (Klus-Stańska 2018) close to them, one of the main assumptions of which is to support learning understood as a process of the continuous reconstruction and transformation of lived experiences. The concept of transformative learning, the “father” of which is Jack Mezirow, and which is currently one of the most-described theories of adult learning, convinces us how we can change the established, and uncritically adopted in our childhood, meaning schemes. According to Mezirow (2000), we look at the world through a network of assumptions and expectations (those are the so-called “frames of reference”) that we acquire during the socialization in our families, communities, in a word, through participation in culture. The frames of reference have a cognitive and emotional dimension including, among other things, interpersonal relationships, ways of thinking, attitudes, but also political orientations, cultural prejudices, ideologies, schemes, stereotypical attitudes and practices, mental habits, religious doctrines, moral and ethical standards (Mezirow 2003:59). From the perspective of the considerations presented here, it is important that the frames of reference have a strongly devel-

oped **emotional layer** through which we filter and give sense to our world. Therefore, the frames of reference form our identity and are the regulators of our behavior and actions in the world. As Mezirow (2003:58) puts it, transformative learning is a process in which we transform the uncritically adopted frames of reference, endowing them with a more open, reflective nature and emotional ability to change. Transformative learning, therefore, leads to a profound change in the way we perceive and interpret ourselves and the world and, consequently, gives the individual a chance to free oneself from the unreflective use of fixed, habitual, often dysfunctional patterns.

Another example of pedagogical projects carried out from the humanistic-critical perspective, and concerning the emotions of teachers, are the studies by Michalinos Zembylas (2002; 2003; 2004; 2005). His research (including the several-year ethnographic study described below) shows how the emotional experiences of teachers are integrated into the culture of an educational institution, and also how much entangled they are in the relationships of power and ideologies current in a school. Owing to the fact that Michalinos Zembylas' project is one of the first qualitative studies showing the role of emotions in education, it is worth presenting here the assumptions and results of the research by Zembylas (2004), who is one of the few to conduct qualitative studies in this area. It was a three-year ethnographic project, in which participated one primary school teacher—Catherine, a person with 25 years of work experience. The data were collected using various methods such as field observations, lesson recordings, in-depth interviews, analyses of

documents (such as the school register or curriculum), and an interesting technique which consisted in the teacher keeping an “emotion diary.” It was also a very special study owing to the researcher's own involvement. As the author says, his role evolved from that of a “participant-observer” at the beginning of the project, to a “participant-collaborator” at its end (Zembylas 2004:189). Based on the numerous data collected over three years, Zembylas proved that the significance of emotions in education boils down to the following three roles:

1. evaluative (assessing), which boils down to the fact that the teacher's emotions are a reflection of how the teacher perceives students, the school grade, teaching process, learning process, et cetera, in other words, the teacher's emotions are an important element of assessing (perceiving) school reality;
2. relational, which consists in the fact that the teacher's emotions are a reflection of the relationships (interactions) in the school environment (this is about relationships between teachers and students, but also with other members of the school community, i.e., other teachers, the school principal administration, parents) and, what is important, those relationships are constantly changing;
3. political, which means that the teacher's emotions “are a reflection of” the school's emotional rules (which depend on the current situation in the educational system, educational authorities, etc.), and as such are an important element of the teacher's self-assessment.

Zembylas' research "reveals" how significantly and deeply emotions are related to educational processes and shows that the teacher's emotions, and especially the ways of expressing and regulating them, are part of the school culture and the emotional rules current within that culture (Góralaska 2018). The cultural factors present in the rules current in a school, in the curriculum, orders, and prohibitions set by educational authorities, et cetera, define what a teacher should feel and how he or she should express his or her emotions in specific teaching situations, and indicate what is and what is not acceptable in the teacher's behavior. Therefore, the rules "order" teachers to express their emotions in everyday school life. But, most importantly, the emotional rules binding on teachers are a kind of "disciplining technique" for the teacher's emotional expression (Zembylas 2002) because they divide the teacher's emotions into proper and improper, normal and deviant. If teachers do not comply with those rules or break them, they do it at their own expense. Therefore, the teacher's work requires investment and commitment, and is understood here as a conscious effort to develop emotional expression so that it complies with what the rules prescribe. The teacher's emotional work understood in such a way can also be an expression of (political) resistance to the rules that are imposed on the teacher (e.g., by educational authorities), which he or she does not agree with (Zembylas 2002:196). It is closely connected with ideological, political, and institutional factors that oblige the teacher to exhibit specific behaviors and take actions, and the adopted strategy of emotional work depends not only on his or her interpersonal relationships with students, but also with colleagues and school administration, so the emotional experiences of teachers have a clear political nature.

Referring to the research of such critical sociologists of education and his own ethnographic study described above, Michalinos Zembylas (2007) also formulates an interesting definition of emotional capital. He presents emotional capital as a collection of resources related to the access to the emotionally valued skills and assets held (mainly by women). Emotional resources are seen here as protectiveness, support, commitment, hence the quite popular view that women are "more emotional." Zembylas notes that professional work is an important place where one acquires emotional resources. For every professional role is associated with the norms, standards, and expectations defining what emotions and in what way employees should display in the performance of their duties. In a word, he defines emotional capital very broadly as types of emotional resources that are very significant not only for the social functioning of individuals, but also have economic consequences. They are also important for the broadly understood participation in culture. In critical terms, emotional capital does not necessarily have to be a positive resource, as it may, like other forms of capital, be a tool of cultural reproduction and may consolidate social inequalities. That happens when the emotional competences acquired in childhood do not comply with (are in contradiction to) the rules of feeling and expressing emotions resulting from the performed occupational or social role, which, as a result, leads to alienation and exclusion (Góralaska 2016).

To confirm that thesis, it is worth recalling here Steven Gordon's (1981) research on and analyses of emotional culture. As part of culture, Gordon distinguished two so-called emotional orientations,

that is, institutional and impulsive. That division suggests that people find their deep, true “self” located in institutional behavior (in accordance with the standards of the institution) or in impulsive behavior (against those standards). Those two different emotional orientations (institutional and impulsive) are manifested in different emotional responses of individuals. In institutional orientation, people express emotions in accordance with the standards current in a given organization, sustaining the standards for the expression of emotions. In impulsive orientation, on the other hand, people express their emotions spontaneously, often disregarding institutional rules and conventions. Interestingly, the same emotion can have different meanings in different orientations (e.g., anger from the institutional perspective means a loss of self-control, and from the impulsive perspective freedom from social norms), and in addition, a person’s emotions can change rapidly depending on the situation. According to Gordon, impulsive orientation focuses on the expression of primary emotions (such as anger, fear, disgust, sadness), which narrows the emotional vocabulary. In turn, institutional orientation focuses on culturally developed social (secondary) emotions, such as loyalty, trust, love, and vindictiveness. The emotional vocabulary of such people is much wider. According to Gordon, impulsive orientation can constitute “better” emotional capital in temporary situations, while institutional orientation in long-term relationships. Steven Gordon’s (1981) analyses clearly show that the “value” of emotional capital in educational institutions is deeply entangled in and dependent on relationships and social roles; it is also a reflection of the position in social structures, and

emotional capital can be a tool of social exclusion and dominance.

The approaches presented above indicate how strong the relationships between emotions and education processes are. They also reveal that emotions are a fundamental component of school culture and a constitutive element of the learning process. Those relationships are so strong that Andy Hargreaves (1998) calls education “emotional practice.” That means that education is a kind of activity that triggers in other people expected or unexpected changes in their emotional experiences. This is explained more precisely by the postmodern concept of **emotional understanding** by Norman Denzin (1984), who defines emotional practice as a type of activity that causes in a given person / other people changes in their emotional experiences. Emotional (co-)understanding is construed here as an intersubjective process, in which a person enters the field of both his or her own emotional experiences and the experiences of others. Interpreting one’s own and someone else’s emotional experiences is crucial to the building of emotional (co-)understanding. Emotional practice makes people become (see themselves as) complex subjects, that is, they perceive themselves in a more problematized way. Emotional practice can be “expressed” not only verbally, but also through the body, and is a peculiar combination of thoughts, feelings, and actions (cf. Hargreaves 2001:1056). Emotional (co-)understanding is, therefore, reaching one’s own (or someone else’s) stock of emotional experiences, recognizing them, and interpreting them.²

² The research on affective contagion explains that the processes of social transfer of emotions between people are possible (cf. Wróbel 2016).

Meanwhile, as Norman Denzin claims, instead of emotional understanding, school everyday life (educational practice) is often characterized by emotional misunderstanding, which, according to Denzin, is a ubiquitous and even chronic feature of school everyday life. Contacts and relationships between students and teachers are not conducive to closeness and are rarely based on mutual understanding. According to Denzin, successful teaching and learning depend largely on the ability to build understanding with students and other participants in the learning process. In other words, education and upbringing largely depend on whether we can create conditions that make emotional (co-)understanding possible. Emotional misunderstanding not only strikes at the essence of the learning process and lowers its quality, but also destructively affects all elements of the (emotional) culture of educational institutions. It is on emotional (mis)understanding that not only success in education depends, but also the fact of whether we are able to build close relationships with students (parents, colleagues) and, thus, to develop pro-social attitudes, work to maximize our own (and our students') development, in a word, to act to build trust and social well-being (Śliwerski 2017:11).

Conclusion

The article describes emotional education in the context of various theoretical perspectives. The approach I have called a *technological-instrumental discourse* presents emotional education as developing emotional and social competences, which are treated as a factor facilitating one's functioning in a school, professional career, and improving functioning in everyday situations.

A different approach to emotional education, which I have described as a *humanistic-critical discourse*, indicates that emotional experiences can be a tool for personal development, but they also have deep social and political entanglements. Here, emotional education means supporting the development of a rich and diverse set of emotional resources, which are important both from the perspective of the individual's openness to the understanding of his or her own experiences and opening the way to personal transformation; they are also important in the context of developing understanding with others, developing empathy, compassion, and solidarity. Acting for the benefit of emotional development construed in such a way can contribute to the reduction of suffering, social inequalities, exclusion, and marginalization.

Considering emotional education in different theoretical contexts leads to different consequences which are important from the perspective of educational practice and supporting emotional development.

Treating emotional education as a set of emotional and social competences is an instrumental approach to emotional development and, from this perspective, emotional education is construed as multiplying resources, that is, skills that make up emotional competences (Dietel 2013). One's emotional resources are treated here as an instrument, a tool that, when properly improved, contributes to the supporting of the individual's development in the various spheres of his or her life, while emotional competences are treated here as the adaptive potential of the subject undergoing such training. Its goal (i.e., one of the training sessions) is for one to achieve such a level of

competence that will make the effect of his or her action correspond to the assumed performance pattern. Emotional education in this approach consists in developing and improving knowledge and skills, the components of emotional competences. As a result of various experiences (both intentional training and everyday situations), the individual develops them throughout his or her life and, therefore, our competences can constantly grow. They are treated here as the acquired, adaptive functions of personality.

In the humanistic-critical approach, emotional resources are of a different nature. Their development consists in the creative activity of the subject in constructing his or her own (self-)cognition, and not in the reception of the content of cultural message. That requires a different organization of educational processes, where, as Peter Alheit (2009:15) aptly observes, “the focal point is no longer the effectiveness of teaching, effective teaching strategies, or the coherence of educational programs, but the situation and conditions on the side of the student.” It means a shift towards non-formal and informal learning, where the most important teaching tasks include supporting subjectivity, empowerment, and acquiring abilities to act actively. The development of emotional resources is based on the holistic and deep changes taking place at the highest level of personal development. In this perspective, it is also important to build conditions for learning to adopt a different point of view, feeling, and acting differently, or in a different way. Shared learning, learning to be with one another, creates opportunities for developing critical and reflective (self-)awareness, but also opens the way to the building of trust and solidarity in the area of school culture. From this perspective,

emotional education is the creation of support for the building of emotional (co-)understanding.

In the era of dominance of neoliberal culture and the domination of life by free market economy, where we are regularly subjected to “becoming skilled in competitive, antisocial, egoistic, privatized behavior, unconducive to activity based on the principles of cooperation, mutual trust, and care for the common good” (Rutkowiak 2007:101), demanding pedagogical actions for the benefit of emotional development is undoubtedly one of the priority tasks in the field of educational sciences. It also seems that those are the reasons why the perspective of emotional education in humanistic-critical terms has much greater educational potential, owing to the fact that it is that vision of education that focuses on the issues of emancipation, social justice, and human freedom. I fully agree with Gert Biesta (2013), one of the leading theoreticians of this trend, who says that instrumental education, currently the dominant vision of education, is an enslaving and oppressive approach due to the fact that it is about forming an individual according to a predetermined pattern (goal) and discipline. Such education is enslaving, it perpetuates social inequalities, and can easily become a (legal) instrument of control and power. Biesta (2013:3) says explicitly that such an understanding of education is a “fundamental misunderstanding of what education is” and proposes a vision of education where building subjectivity and sensitivity is important. Moreover, most importantly, as claimed by Tomasz Szkudlarek (2010:487), one of its supporters, critical pedagogy “is an extremely interesting, theoretically dense, analytically reliable, politically important, and pedagogically responsible theory.”

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