

**Zeitschrift:** Traverse : Zeitschrift für Geschichte = Revue d'histoire  
**Herausgeber:** [s.n.]  
**Band:** 18 (2011)  
**Heft:** 3: Rat holen, Rat geben = Consulter, guider et orienter

**Artikel:** Close Encounters, Time for Change : School Psychology and the Uses of Intimacy in an Expanding Welfare State. The Example of Basel in the 1970s  
**Autor:** Brändli Blumenbach, Sibylle  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-391013>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 24.08.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

---

## **Close Encounters, Time for Change**

**School Psychology and the Uses of Intimacy  
in an Expanding Welfare State.  
The Example of Basel in the 1970s**

**Sibylle Brändli Blumenbach**

### **Introduction**

This essay would like to contribute to the growing body of historical research within the larger field of contemporary and welfare history, which has devoted itself to the psychological and psychosocial professions working with children.<sup>1</sup> It deals with the prehistory of the “systemic turn” and the broad turn to therapy and counseling which became noticeable in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>2</sup> During this time the biopolitical rationale of the welfare state shifts towards understanding good child rearing practices, child health and education as a resource in an expanding consumer society and service economy. The essay focuses on therapeutic and counseling arenas in school psychology in 1970s Basel, Switzerland. On the basis of client files, I argue that in the 1960s and 1970s institutional attention to jeopardized children and families intensified as counseling and therapeutic encounters became a larger fixture in the dealings between professionals and clients. Negotiating education and mental health with children and families thus became a much more intimate affair than it had been in the earlier history of the institutions concerned, much to the often hapless surprise of both clients and professionals. Moreover, both professionals and clients had to pick their way through a rapidly expanding network of services with its growing bulk of clientele.

This essay seeks to sound out the provisional intimate dealings between clients and professionals. I would first like to clarify the concept of intimacy which I use to characterize a new quality in the relationships between professionals and clients within the framework of notions of citizenship. I then give a comparative run through local institutional history. The repercussions for the single child will be dealt with as I detail the case of the schoolgirl “Anna” using Anselm Strauss’s concept of “trajectory”.

## Conceptualizing Intimacy and Citizenship

In her introductory essay to the 1998 issue of *Critical Inquiry* entitled “Intimacy”, Lauren Berlant characterizes intimacy as a utopian sentiment and an everyday longing which crosses the conceptual boundaries between public and private spheres. It involves, she writes, “an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way”. Intimacy, she writes, is marked by “contradictory desires” and normatively policed within “institutions of intimacy” such as the family and the state.<sup>3</sup> This has been a hallmark of theorizations of intimacy ever since the groundbreaking work of Jürgen Habermas in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which posits 18th-century familial intimacy as the starting point and blueprint for (male) bourgeois self-confirmation and self-development in the literary and political public arena.<sup>4</sup> Berlant’s interest, however, lies in the unexpected appearances of and desires for intimacy. “It can be portable”, she writes, “unattached to a concrete space: a drive that creates spaces around it through practices.” In other words, intimacy can be both a longing and a lived state sought and found in unlikely places, and necessary for living.<sup>5</sup>

Leaving aside the concrete political moment of the late 1990s she addresses, I would like to highlight four conceptual connections in Berlant’s argument: her notion that intimacy develops out of practices of social attachment; that these practices create spaces; that intimacy is not a register of feeling and hope restricted to the “private” sphere; and that it is heavily policed – there are legitimate and illegitimate forms of intimacy. In other words, intimacy is highly implicated in the political domain, very broadly understood. Berlant puts forward her conception in order to ease intimacy away from a-historical, conventional and highly ideological understandings of the term. These would have intimacy defined as forms of private physical and emotional closeness sheltered from public view.

My argument of intensified contact and intimacy in counseling settings is usefully inserted into the framework of new approaches to citizenship. In the editorial of their well-received special issue of *Gender and History* Kathleen Canning and Sonya O. Rose emphasize the connection between subjectivities and citizenship. They incorporate T. H. Marshall’s conception of citizenship as grounding civil, political and social rights and view citizenship as both “status and practice”.<sup>6</sup> Canning/Rose conceive of a broad notion of citizenship as “a political status assigned to individuals by states, as a relation of belonging to specific communities, or as a set of social practices that define the relationships between peoples and states and among people within communities”. Particularly in this last sense, drawing on psychological services can be defined as a practice of everyday citizenship in which the claims to education and health are enacted and fulfilled.

## Intimacy and School Psychology

I look now at a venue not normally chosen for study when the subject is intimacy, namely the dealings between representatives of state institutions and their clients in the second half of the 20th century.<sup>7</sup> I take up intimacy not so much as an end in itself nor as the goal of interaction but, in a Foucaultian sense, as a productive force, in order to see what it engenders and how its emotional intensity expresses itself. In Berlant's terms, I concentrate on "the aspiration for a narrative of something shared",<sup>8</sup> a narrative of a common journey between clients and professionals at the end of which is a happy/successful child and its happy/successful family, as the case may be – although most narratives must, of course, fall short.

Social and psychological services for school children and their families in the 1960s and the 1970s are a particularly instructive case for testing the relevance of the question of intimacy in the practices of the state welfare. I would like to suggest three reasons for this.

First, as Mary Douglas and others have said, institutions, welfare institutions too, are authorized to make life and death, that is life altering decisions – even if these come in the guise of professional routine.<sup>9</sup> The work of the agencies under scrutiny formed part of decision-making processes whose purpose in our case was to further the education of children, to facilitate *and* to police family life and child rearing. Counseling arenas provided a middle ground for mediating institutional rationale and the claims of clients. Institutions in the area of education and mental health in which school psychologists claimed expertise and authority operated in this field. Questions dealt with in this middle ground were highly important for the parents of the children involved. Does my son have to leave normal school and enter remedial school? Does my daughter's hyperactivity have somatic or psychic causes? Will I be forced to place my child in an educational home? How can I avoid this? Is our family willing to enter family therapy? Parents had to acknowledge and tackle these and similar questions in order to profit from the amenities of the welfare state and to participate successfully in the society of which they were members.

Second, throughout the 20th century the tortured bids for authority on the part of the psychological and psychosocial professions hinged on their ability to prove in practice that they could successfully regulate the social, that is offer useful expertise, administer relief, and mediate between concerned parties. Psychologists and psychosocial experts emphasized consensual dealings between themselves and their clients or patients in order to fulfill these tasks. Despite making much headway, their authority has remained insecure when compared to the medical and legal professions.<sup>10</sup> Their precarious position and their privileged knowledge



and access to the lives of clients make it particularly interesting to explore the changing uses and productions of intimacy in their work.

Third, the postwar world saw the creation of new venues for intimate and intense experience in such diverse areas as politics, entertainment, everyday and intellectual life. These are central for understanding not only the social changes and reconfigurations of subjectivity after the Second World War but also the fierce cultural and political contestations that characterized these decades. The countercultural and reformist energies that animated a whole generation of social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists were drawn to new communicative models of therapy and counseling, client-centered approaches and a general experimental openness toward the possibilities of human relationships.<sup>11</sup> Child rearing practices and school were crucial targets of change.

### Basel in Comparison

In the course of the 20th century, the drive to intensify communicative contact connected professionals from different disciplines in the human sciences who worked in different institutions. It formed part of the growing and successful effort of psychological and psychotherapeutic discourse to articulate social life. In the words of Nikolas Rose, the work of psychology has been to move discursive construction of the subject from “the normal individual” of the 19th century to “the ethics of autonomous selfhood” in the late 20th century. One of the contexts in which this labor of psychology could take place was and is the arena of counseling and psychotherapy.<sup>12</sup> This development has discreet national and regional histories. The systematic multidisciplinary approach to working with troubled children and their families did not develop in Basel and the rest of German-speaking Switzerland until well after the Second World War. This is not the case in the French-speaking cantons of Switzerland, where medico-pedagogical services were set up in the 1930s as polyclinics, emulating the American child guidance model.<sup>13</sup> In the USA, the child guidance movement (and thus the psychological interpretation of the causes of troublesome children’s behavior) had by the 1940s all but obliterated the older Progressive traditions of emphasizing economic and social factors.<sup>14</sup>

The canton of Basel set up the first school psychology office in Switzerland in 1927 as part of an enlargement of school medical services, a biopolitical move for “tracking” children along the lines of health and educational ability with the means of testing.<sup>15</sup> The *Schulpsychologischer Dienst* (SPD) was a department of the *Schularztamt* within the Ministry of Education and independent of the schools. It was not a part of the judicial system. Any service offered was accepted on a voluntary basis within the bounds of civil law.

The SPD was entrusted with psychodiagnostic functions (including, importantly, intelligence testing) and counseling of parents and teachers regarding psychological and psychiatric measures as well as school tracking.<sup>16</sup> Until the 1984 *Jugendgesetz*, which served to centralize youth services, the legislative basis for this authority was anchored solely in one paragraph of the 1929 *Schulgesetz*, which defined school psychology as an aid to general health welfare measures.<sup>17</sup> After the first school psychologist, Ernst Probst, left office in 1959 the service expanded from two school psychologists in 1962 to six in 1970, reaching seven in 1978 and twelve in 1995/96. In 1952, 1843 consultations were conducted (there being 20,106 pupils in regular schools in Basel, not including kindergarten) reaching 2039 consultations in 1962 (23,757 pupils). In 1972 7 percent and in 1982 8 percent of all schoolchildren were treated. By 1987 11 percent of the school population came into contact with the SPD reaching 13 percent in 1990. Average consultation time moved from 1.9 hours in 1960 to 3.2 hours in 1970, reaching 3.9 hours in 1980. By far the greater proportion of pupils came in for one or two consultations only, which usually encompassed a testing session and subsequent discussion of results.<sup>18</sup> Since the 1960s, an emphasis on collective and intelligence tests was meant to ensure the objective legitimization of the SPD's knowledge base. This emphasis was offset by a drive to establish the service as a counseling and not merely as a diagnostic service.<sup>19</sup> Psychoanalysis and the "systemic turn" only entered Basel school psychology with the election of Peter Gutzwiller as the head of the service in 1983.<sup>20</sup>

In most cases, it was teachers or parents who voiced the complaints that brought the children into the consultation rooms. Learning difficulties and/or behavioral problems were the most frequently cited reasons. School psychologists acted as go-betweens in charge of diagnosing what was wrong with a child – by means of psychological testing, parent/child counseling and communication with teachers. They had the responsibility of triage, meaning a first appraisal of the severity and complexity of a case and the allocation of the right kind of help. Thus, it was their business to help initiate treatment and measures, referring families to other services, initiating a transfer to another school, recommending psychotherapists, making referrals to educational but also correctional homes. Increasingly, the diagnostic and triage process was *accompanied* by counseling, especially in severe cases when children and families were separated, the old order of choice. Home placements did eventually recede as a consequence of more emphasis on counseling modes and family therapy but only with a time lag. The peak of home placement coincides with the peak in psychotherapies. Home placements were initiated for 4.1 percent of all single cases in 1966/67, reaching 6 percent in 1977/78, and receding to 2.8 percent in 1985/86 and 1.7 percent in 1990. Between 1960 and 1990, the proportion of children or youths whom school psychologists

in Basel successfully referred to a psychotherapist was always quite small. (There are no figures on the indications or gender make-up for referrals.) In 1970, a little under 2 percent of all clients went on to receive psychotherapeutic treatment, the proportion rises and peaks in 1976 at a little under 7 percent receding to a little over 3 percent in 1980 and staying lower than 3 percent throughout the 1980s.<sup>21</sup> The overall drift is not a shift from home placement to counseling but an intensification of psychological and educational attention on all scores vis a vis hard pressed schoolchildren.

This intensification of counseling and therapy-oriented case practices was mirrored by the establishment of three institutions in the wider structure of school children's welfare: first, a pioneering closed institution, the *Psychotherapiestation* which was founded in 1968 with room for 8–12 children suffering from heavy neuroses and psychotic episodes; second, a pilot project institutionalized in 1974 to screen kindergarten children which offered a whole program of counseling and facilities to promote child development; and, third, the establishment of a diploma in *Erziehungsberatung* at the University of Basel in 1968.<sup>22</sup>

Overall, the number of institutions offering similar services increased, thereby increasing the need for orientation. The most important institutions the SPD worked with were the *Sozialpädagogischer Dienst* (SDS), and the private organization *Familien- und Erziehungsberatung* (FABE). The SDS was located in the Ministry of Education and had a legal obligation to administer or secure an array of services to needy children and their families. The *Familien- und Erziehungsberatung* was founded in 1932 as a state instrument of poor relief. From the start, it focused on family and educational counseling. It began to offer its services to a socially more heterogeneous clientele beginning in 1969. Delinquent children and youths were brought to the attention of the *Jugendamt* within the Ministry of Justice which had its own diagnostic channels. Connections to the services and juvenile courts in the Ministry of Justice were tight, but the separation between the two sets of institutions and the voluntary nature of the Ministry of Education services gave parents and teachers greater leeway in staving off attempts at coercion.

## Navigational Challenges and Single Trajectories

In Basel, entrenched and emergent institutions responsible for child welfare were caught up selectively in the reform projects of the 1960s and 1970s. Disturbed children facing failure at school and their parents thus naturally were confronted with “old” and “new” forms of attention simultaneously. For example: parents received educational counseling and consented to placing their children in homes;

or they were faced with a school psychologist fueled by anti-authoritarian sentiment in conflict with a school teacher who refused to attend to the Italian language background of the client family. Different practitioners could be at odds with one another. A teacher might be very willing to transfer one of her pupils to remedial school while a school social worker would insist on keeping the child's school network intact; in some cases, contact between the SPD and the client family continued intermittently with no recourse to previous dealings.<sup>23</sup> Where exactly the institutional trajectory began could have great influence on its course. The case of a girl caught stealing repeatedly in school was likely to find a different resolution depending on whether her parents quickly took matters into their own hands and sent her to a psychiatrist in private practice or whether a teacher reported her to the *Jugendamt*. These complex situations raise important questions about the navigational challenges to which children, parents and professionals were exposed and the ways they met these challenges. Clients and practitioners voiced different needs, followed agendas that more often than not conflicted with one another, and placed different and sometimes idiosyncratic demands on the scenarios of support. These navigational challenges become especially apparent when the eye is trained on individual cases, one of which will shortly be presented.

I would like to frame the outcomes and the course of these complex interactions between clients and practitioners within the logic of the single case which I assume to follow certain overarching patterns but always to retain an irreducible idiosyncrasy of its own.

The symbolic interactionist and co-inventor of grounded theory, Anselm Strauss, has given us a keen instrument for dealing with complex patterns of social interaction *and* single cases of interaction which play to the contingencies of all social action. He has given us the term *trajectory* and muses upon its centrality to his work and the twofold meaning it encompasses in a late book entitled *Constant Permutations of Action* (1993). “[I]t refers to a course of action but also embraces the interaction of multiple actors and contingencies that may be unanticipated and not entirely manageable. [...] To be more exact now, I shall use *trajectory* in two ways: (1) the course of any experienced phenomenon as it evolves over time (an engineering project, a chronic illness, dying, a social revolution, or national problems attending mass or ‘uncontrollable’ immigration and (2) the actions and interactions contributing to its evolution. That is, phenomena do not just automatically unfold nor are they straightforwardly determined by social economic, political, cultural, or other circumstances; rather, they are in part *shaped by the interactions* of concerned actors.”<sup>24</sup> Most importantly, he adds that it is the more “fateful” kind of trajectory which does not neatly follow a rational pattern of action which has occupied him in most in his research. “[A] course of action can be directed at managing an evolving set of problems that are so unanticipated,

difficult, and in extreme cases so ‘fateful’ that control of the course of action is threatened and even rendered virtually impossible. [...] Sometimes this trajectory turns into a ‘cumulative mess’.”<sup>25</sup> Mess is thus not an amorphous tangle but a process *and* a product constituted by unintended outcomes, unanticipated problems, interruptions and a loss of overview by all concerned. Once given that such trajectories might be more normal than the “rational” kind, one can commence a closer analysis of a single case.

### **Messy Trajectories, or: Anna (I)**

School psychologists were likely to perceive severe problematic behavior and poor school performance as a sign that something possibly beyond immediate perception was wrong with the child. Offering intensive triage work, that is diagnostics cum counseling, was a way of signaling to parents and children that the practitioner was committing him- or herself to the clients and their difficult case. In order to proceed, all parties had to be willing to admit that the psychic life of the child was in trouble because of a dynamic in the family or the teacher-pupil relationship. Working on relationships had emerged as an important watchword for the experts – with few roadmaps for how exactly to proceed, since professional schooling often lagged behind the perceived needs in daily practice.

In what follows, I will read the twists and turns of the case trajectory that emerge from the SPD client file on Anna H., born in 1965.

Anna H. was brought before the school psychologist in the first half of the 1970s.<sup>26</sup> Anna’s mother is a native of Basel. She meets her future husband while he is stationed with the US army in southern Germany. Anna’s mother had enjoyed secretarial training, nothing is recorded about the father’s profession. Three siblings are born at short intervals, the family moving back and forth between the US and Basel. Shortly after returning to Basel, a benign growth is discovered in Anna’s arm. She undergoes surgery and enters elementary school. More operations follow in the United States, where the family moves from town to town as the father looks for a job. In the mid 1970s, shortly after the family has definitely relocated to Basel, the mother contacts the SPD for an appointment, because she is afraid that her daughter will not be able to handle school. Moreover, she reports that Anna is very difficult at home, throwing temper tantrums and flaunting her crippled arm in public in order to force her parents to give in to her. The psychologist acts quickly and successfully places Anna in third grade of elementary school. Testing reveals intense anxieties about her disability and emotional difficulties. The psychologist would like to send Anna to a psychotherapist but hesitates, because he does not want to cause another rupture if the family decides to move



again. The parents come in for counseling several times and also apply for tutorials to help Anna catch up. The psychologist organizes the tutorials and, on the parents urging, begins inquiries about placing Anna in a boarding school. The home in question on the outskirts of Basel refuses to accept Anna because of her disability: they state that Anna's frequent physiotherapy sessions in Basel would interfere with the school schedule. The psychologist, who emphasizes in the files that some action must be taken, sends a psychodiagnostic report to the state-run *Psychotherapiestation* (see above) asking them to do a check. The summary of this report gives an impression of what the psychologist means when he calls Anna a complex case: "In Anna's case we are confronted with a confusing array of contradictions, of which her different behavior at school and at home, her bad test results and her good performance at school are only the most noticeable ones. [...] However, behind her facade of outer overconformity we find an extreme lack of affective relational capacity. This is a central problematic most likely originating in a disturbed relation to both parents." Although the *Psychotherapiestation* usually only treats interns, Anna begins psychotherapy sessions there with her parents' consent in the spring of 1976. She has begun to do well at school, her teacher is clearly satisfied with her progress and describes her as athletic despite her disability. In their diagnostic report, the *Psychotherapiestation* strongly urges the parents to admit Anna as an intern. At the same time, the parents continue to see the school psychologist, asking him again to find a boarding school for Anna. He refuses to become active before they have made a final decision about the *Psychotherapiestation*. They, in turn, refuse to have Anna admitted as an intern and, in the early summer of 1976, send her to a psychiatrist in private practice. The family situation remains tense, as does their financial situation. This is what the mother tells the psychologist in their last conversation in the fall of 1976 when they both discuss referring Anna to a temporary remedial class in the new year. Throughout the years in which Anna has tutorials, the progress reports stress that therapy would be much more important than learning support.

It might be revealing to return now to the issue of messiness as a key characteristic of trajectories in Anselm Strauss's sense. The complexity of the case (as a case) arises from the different forces acting upon its trajectory. The psychologist diagnoses severe emotional problems, a physical disability and school problems. Anna has had to adjust, school- and countrywise, to several new environments. And she expresses a painful awareness of what is troubling her when asked in projective tests who she would like to be: "a very small child that was only just born, then I can begin all over again and might not have any illnesses". When asked to list three wishes she says: "Wealth, a castle, no tumor in my arm. Can I wish for something else? That my daddy will come soon." Parents and professional are at odds about the right measures to take almost from the start – which is why the

trajectory moves ahead in fits and starts and the files end with no “solution”. But Anna remains well-integrated and popular at school, so the files say, even as she switches classes, one of the constants of her trajectory. Another constant seems to be the commitment of the psychologist as he registers the anxieties of the girl again and again. The parents provide another constant by repeatedly calling on the assistance of the SPD. These three constants pull in different directions and contribute to the dynamic of the trajectory. As the files end, the school trajectory seems to be safe while the therapeutic trajectory remains arrested.

### **Intimate Conflict, or: Anna (II)**

The therapeutic trajectory is structured by ever growing conflict between the parents and the school psychologist as contact intensifies. In what follows, I explore this trajectory of conflict, reading the shift in private mores in the larger society as an enabling condition for its course and highlighting its intimate dimensions.

When Anna’s mother enters the consultation room for the first time in the spring of 1975, she has very clear ideas about what she wants for her daughter. She wants her to enter school as soon as possible. The mother continues to take the initiative and makes appointments with the psychologist during the entire summer, stressing that her daughter needs help at school and can hardly be tamed at home. In a consultation in late August the school psychologist quotes the parents as saying “that already in the mornings they are afraid of what will happen during the daytime”. In various consultations, he has asked them why this might be so. Their answers show no self-implication: “Parents believe she is jealous of her younger siblings. Mother: she [the daughter] is cold as a fish.” Or: “Child screams and throws tantrums when she does not get what she wants. When the mother does not comply the child receives attention from her grandmother or screams until she gets what she wants.” The parents continue to report an exacerbating situation, and, in the psychologist’s view, do not understand that the problem boils down to a “massive disturbance between mother and daughter”, of which he wants to make the mother aware. This strong resolve (and an aggravated tone in his counseling minutes) grows after he undertakes a Rorschach protocol with Anna and reports the results to Anna’s parents: “Parents want me to test Y [Anna’s first sister] as well with the same test. Are eager to know what the test ‘says’. Want recipes.” Then comes the diagnostic summary: “barely average intelligence”, “relationship problems”, no “organic malfunction” and no “infant neglect”. He goes on to ruminate about the family: “Life style: American-superficial, facade, not impressed by what things look like behind or underneath [the facade]. Parents talk and talk things to bits a lot, cannot really verbalize their feelings. Interesting



people to talk to as long as no one tries to scratch the surface (cold reaction). [...] Mother and father are affectively cool despite their easygoing American and jovial comportment; mother has an added narcissistic, authoritarian-phallic strain. Intellect and reason play an important role in their lives. – Child tries to accommodate to this situation to a certain extent ('I must be reasonable') but affect does not get enough space. Child rebels against affective coldness." The psychologist reports a powerplay between the parents and himself. He represents the conflict as one in which the parents attempt to avoid self-implication at all costs and would like to send their child to a boarding school – not for the good of the child but because they want to avoid critique. The dispute over continuing therapy escalates in spring 1976 as the school psychologist's notes on one encounter illustrate: "[Parents] are asking me to place Anna in an educational home. Obviously, they are growing more and more uncomfortable as therapy progresses, because they would have to get involved and are now chickening out. Very clever, and trying to set me up against the therapist."

Despite the conflictual nature of dealings, they echo the larger drift of the liberalization of private and thus family life. There is a striking mode of tolerance on the part of the psychologist and a striking openness on the part of the clients. The lower-class background of Anna's family and their unsteady circumstances would have tilted judgment towards stricter policing only a decade earlier. In the course of contact, home placement does become an issue, as we have seen, but only as one option among others. Referring the child to take up a stay at the *Psychotherapiestation* as an intern constitutes removal, but one which depends on enlisting the parents to make changes in their family life.

The pool of different knowledges about Anna and the family grows through contact, as does the parents' knowledge of the possible paths to take as the psychologist informs them of his inquiries. (Opposing) opinions are formed as both parties negotiate possible paths of treatment in various meetings. It is through this contact that the professional and the parents get to know one another, their conflictual dealings are both the result and the cause of a certain intimacy. Clearly, both sides offer intimacy and set up a provisional intimate situation – but to different ends and with different expectations. The parents would like to change the child or remove it from their everyday lives without any repercussions for themselves. The school psychologist aims for working on family relationships as he tries to involve the parents in their child's psychotherapy. This would be a new form of intimacy for them, but they refuse to negotiate. Intimacy is arrested, while remaining a productive force.

In the logic of professionalism, the actions and self-disclosure registered in the psychologist's notes can be read as signs of incomplete professionalism. His belligerence seems to be motivated by frustration as much as by a conceptual

plan, and the dogged determination to give the girl all the help he can seems to be motivated more by personal than by professional, and therefore controlled, empathy. Moralizing observations and heartfelt suspicions dot his notes. However, he keeps the main element of a professional counseling approach in place: it is the parents who are to make decisions, and decide they do. But they do not take on board the invitation to enter self-critical dialogue as the school psychologist urges them to and thus appear as incomplete clients.

There might also have been cultural misunderstandings involved. The psychologist's diatribes against the superficial "Americanness" of his clients appear only after he realizes that willing self-disclosure does not necessarily mean full compliance with measures proposed. We might surmise that as the social and cultural backgrounds of clientele became more diverse in the late 1960s with an influx especially of Italian and Spanish speaking children, the often parochial worlds of medico-pedagogical professionals in Basel were given a shake-up. This also contributed to the messiness of client trajectories.

### **Growing Pains:**

#### **Enlarging the Welfare State, Enlarging the Space of Intimacy**

I have used Lauren Berlant's thoughts on intimacy in order to think about intimacy's instrumental uses in an unaccustomed place: the consultation room as a space for relative strangers – in our case, families and psychological professionals. I have contended that what we are seeing in the 1960s and 1970s is intensified attention to school children and families in a venture to enlarge educational possibilities in a democratic state which is facilitating social mobility for more of its members; a society whose biopolitical rationale is more geared to understanding good child rearing practices, child health and education. Attention intensifies as more and more institutions systematically take on board counseling approaches. In the larger framework of Canning/Rose's linkage of subjectivity and citizenship, drawing on psychological services can be defined as a practice of everyday citizenship just as professional counseling is an act of enabling citizenship. In addition, counseling communicates further navigational skills, including a psychological self-awareness and the ability to draw on other services in managing one's life. The welfare state thus has an interest in enlarging the spaces of intimacy in order to manage the lives of its citizens and the relations between citizens and the state.

The modes of professional communication involved are based on an intimate atmosphere of trust and self-disclosure on the part of clients and non-coerciveness on the part of professionals. As medico-pedagogical institutions expanded and

diversified, the navigational challenges for professionals and clients grew. “Doing counseling” takes time. Professionals provided guidance but also needed time to gain an overview of the past trajectories of their clients. As clientele became culturally more diverse and class discrimination slowly made way for equal opportunity policies, guidance also became a more complex activity, just as drawing on services did. These transitional times are reflected in rocky trajectories such as the one I have explored above. As we have seen, it was not only the “Annas” in the client files of a state institution who had growing pains. These growing pains also captured state services and the citizenry as both struggled, each in their different ways and often at cross purposes, to navigate modern times.

#### Notes

- 1 An overview of American school psychology is given in Thomas K. Fagan, “School Psychology”, in Irving B. Weiner (ed.), *Handbook of Psychology*, vol. I, Hoboken (NJ) 2003, 413–431. Histories of (German) school psychology can be found in: Kurt Aurin, “Zur Geschichte der Schulpsychologie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Entwicklungen und Neuorientierungen”, in Bernd-Joachim Ertelt, Manfred Hofer (ed.), *Theorie und Praxis der Beratung. Beratung in Schule, Familie, Beruf und Betrieb*, Nürnberg 1996, 71–95; Berufsverband Deutscher Psychologinnen und Psychologen e. V. Sektion Schulpsychologie, *75 Jahre Schulpsychologie in Deutschland*, Bonn 1997. For incipient histories of school psychology in Switzerland cf.: Anne Dupanloup, “Le succès médical et social d’une psychopathologie. L’hyperactivité infantile”, *carnet de bord* 2 (2001), 23–37; Catherine Fussinger, “Du rôle des femmes et des hommes dans le développement de la pédopsychiatrie en Suisse Romande (1930–1950)”, in Jacqueline Carroy et al. (ed.), *Les femmes dans les sciences de l’homme (XIXe–XXe siècles). Inspiratrices, collaboratrices ou créatrices?*, Paris 2005, 107–124; Nadia Ramsauer, “Verwahrlost”. *Kindswegnahmen und die Entstehung der Jugendfürsorge im schweizerischen Sozialstaat 1900–1945*, Zurich 2000; Elisabeth Schaffner-Hänny, *Wo Europas Kinderpsychiatrie zur Welt kam. Anfänge und Entwicklungen in der Region Jurasüdfuss (Aargau, Solothurn, Bern, Fribourg, Neuenburg)*, Dietikon 1997; Carlo Wolfisberg, *Heilpädagogik und Eugenik. Zur Geschichte der Heilpädagogik in der deutschsprachigen Schweiz (1800–1950)*, Zurich 2002; Roland Käser, *Neue Perspektiven in der Schulpsychologie*, Berne 1993; Johannes Gerber, *Geschichte der Schulpsychologischen Dienste der Deutschschweiz*, Basel 1994 (unpublished master’s thesis).
- 2 Systemic approaches shifted the emphasis of treatment from the isolated individual to include the web of relations in his/her immediate environment. Early roots can be found in European family therapy as well as psychotherapy with disturbed children in the US in the 1950s and 1960s. Ursel Sickendiek, Frank Engel, Frank Nestmann, *Beratung. Eine Einführung in sozialpädagogische und psychosoziale Beratungsansätze*, Weinheim 1999, 180 ff.
- 3 Lauren Berlant, “Intimacy. A Special Issue”, *Critical Inquiry* 24/2 (1998), 281–289, especially 281, 285, 284.
- 4 Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Neuwied 1962, 60 ff.
- 5 Berlant (cf. note 3), 284 (emphasis in the original).
- 6 Kathleen Canning, Sonya O. Rose, “Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity. Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations”, *Gender and History* 13/2 (2001), 427–444, especially 427 f.

- 7 Besides the foundational feminist work on *organisierte Mütterlichkeit* and maternalist politics, e. g. Seth Koven, Sonya Michel (ed.), *Mothers of a New World. Maternalist Politics and the Origins of the Welfare State*, New York 1993, I have in mind such exemplary studies as: Seth Koven, *Slumming. Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*, Princeton (NJ) 2004; Judith Sealander, *The Failed Century of the Child. Governing America's Young in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge 2003; Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion. Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America*, Princeton (NJ) 1994, 152–185, 256–306; Ramsauer (cf. note 1), 97–161.
- 8 Berlant (cf. note 3), 281.
- 9 Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think*, Syracuse (NY) 1986, 111–129.
- 10 Cf. Chris Nottingham, “The Rise of the Insecure Professionals”, *International Review of Social History* 52/3 (2007), 455–475.
- 11 Cf. Ruth Grossmass, *Psychische Krisen und sozialer Raum. Eine Sozialphänomenologie psychosozialer Beratung*, Tübingen 2000, 65 ff.; Sickendiek/Engel/Nestmann (cf. note 2); 25–31.
- 12 Cf. Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul. The Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd ed., London 1999 (1989), 17.
- 13 Cf. Fussinger (cf. note 1).
- 14 Cf. Kathleen W. Jones, *Taming the Troublesome Child. American Families, Child Guidance, and the Limits of Psychiatric Authority*, Cambridge (MA) 2002 (1999).
- 15 Berne was the first canton to offer educational counseling to clients of school medical services in 1920. Gerber (cf. note 1), 55 f.; Suzanne Hegg, “Die Bernische Erziehungsberatung”, *Der Jugendpsychologe. Zeitschrift der Vereinigung Schweizerischer Kinder- und Jugendpsychologen SKJP (VSSE)* 2/3 (1977), 37–114, especially 40–45. – By 1953, Switzerland counted 55 institutions offering school psychological services ranging from psychiatric institutions to integrated medico-pedagogical services especially in the French speaking part of Switzerland. Käser (cf. note 1), 33 f. For reasons of space German names are not translated into English.
- 16 Short histories of the SPD are given in: Ernst Probst, «Rückblick auf die Anfänge der Erziehungsberatung in Basel», *Der Jugendpsychologe. Zeitschrift der Vereinigung Schweizerischer Kinder- und Jugendpsychologen SKJP (VSSE)* 2/3 (1977), 5–11; Ernst Siegrist, “Der Schulpsychologische Dienst Basel-Stadt 1959–1977”, *Der Jugendpsychologe. Zeitschrift der Vereinigung Schweizerischer Kinder- und Jugendpsychologen SKJP (VSSE)* 2/3 (1977), 11–37.
- 17 Schulgesetz und Gesetz betreffend die Kindergärten des Kantons Basel-Stadt, 4. 4. 1929.
- 18 Cf. yearly reports 1940–1971/72: Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt (StABS), ED-REG 374-5-1, *Jahresberichte des Schulpsychologischen Dienstes*; StABS, ED-REG 374-3-3, *Jahresberichte des Schularztsamts*; yearly reports 1972/73–2000, archival holdings of the *Schulpsychologischer Dienst des Kantons Basel-Stadt*. Since the statistics do not remain consistent over time, the above features can only give an impression of the workload.
- 19 This is the explicit tenor of the lengthy yearly report for 1969/70 which commemorates the expansion and modernization of the service since 1959. Cf. *Jahresbericht des Schulpsychologischen Dienstes, Jahresbericht des Schularztsamts*, 1969/70, 50–100.
- 20 Peter Paul Gutzwiller, *Konzeptualisierung eines Schulpsychologischen Dienstes. Strukturelle, methodische und inhaltliche Aspekte der psychologischen Intervention*, Berne 1998.
- 21 Cf. *Jahresberichte des Schulpsychologischen Dienstes*, yearly reports 1940–1971/72, and *Jahresberichte des Schularztsamts*; yearly reports 1972/73–2000, archival holdings of the *Schulpsychologischer Dienst des Kantons Basel-Stadt*.
- 22 A portrait of the *Psychotherapiestation* is given in its yearly report for 1973, StABS, ED-REG 25c (1) 4-2. Cf. the planning report on the *Früherfassungs- und Frühförderungsstelle* drawn up in 1972, StABS, ED-REG 25d (1) 3-5, *Unterlagen betreffend Organisation und Planung des Sozialpädagogischen Dienstes*. A summary of the history of educational

counseling at the University of Basel is given in Hans Werder (ed.), *20 Jahre Institut für Spezielle Pädagogik und Psychologie. Eine Übersicht mit Berichten und Dokumenten zur Gründung und zum gegenwärtigen Stand*, [Basel] 1991.

- 23 These examples and the case example detailed below are taken from a set of 30 client files from the SPD. They assemble an even sample of children born between 1947 and 1986 chosen according to a random procedure designed to capture files with three or more consultations between client(s) and school psychologists. This procedure allowed me to single out children with behavioral and/or learning problems. My research on counseling and the meanings of psychology for everyday life was financed by the Swiss National Foundation within its National Research Programme No. 51 "Integration and Exclusion", under project number 4051-40-69104/1. Quotes from the file of "Anna" for this publication have been cleared by the head of the SPD, Dr. Peter Gutzwiller. In order to preserve the anonymity of the persons involved, I have made minor alterations and do not reference single documents. The translations from the German are my own.
- 24 Anselm Strauss, *Continual Permutations of Action*, New York 1993, 53 f. (emphasis in the original).
- 25 Ibid., 153.
- 26 A look at SPD statistics in yearly reports of the 1970s reveals that Anna belongs to the 5 percent group of severe cases demanding more than three consultations.

## **Résumé**

### **Des rencontres intimes en mutation. La psychologie scolaire et l'usage de l'intimité par les politiques sociales à Bâle durant les années 1970**

En utilisant un dossier personnel tiré des archives du Service de psychologie scolaire de la Ville de Bâle, cet article reconstruit le cas d'une jeune fille (née en 1965) qui se retrouve, en compagnie de ses parents, en contact fréquent avec le Service de psychologie scolaire au milieu des années 1970. Ces rencontres sont motivées par le désir des parents de trouver un appui scolaire et psychologique pour leur enfant qualifiée de «difficile». Les notes prises durant ces rendez-vous ainsi que les mesures prises par les psychologues scolaires offrent des perspectives d'une part sur les dimensions participatives de l'action pratique des politiques sociales, domaine alors en pleine mutation, et d'autre part sur les besoins en orientation exprimés par différents groupes sociaux. Les offres de démarches participatives telles que les consultations psychosociales s'affirment de plus en plus au sein du monde scolaire et gagnent en légitimité notamment par le biais de la pratique et de la demande d'orientation. L'article suit dans le détail le parcours d'une démarche de conseil afin de mieux comprendre les formes émergentes d'interaction entre le/la «citoyen/ne» et «l'Etat». Comme le démontre l'exemple choisi, ces deux pôles produisent et exigent de manière novatrice une nouvelle relation d'intimité.

*(Traduction: Matthieu Leimgruber)*