

Between Sad Story, Life History and Hidden Conflicts An in-depth hermeneutic re-reading of the Jack Roller

The paper will address two different levels of discussing the qualities of working with (single) cases in Criminology. Firstly, Stanley's „own story“ will be read from a hermeneutic point of view. Secondly, this exemplary interpretation step will be discussed in a wider frame: asking for the challenges and benefits of hermeneutic and subject-theoretical approaches for Qualitative Criminology.

Stanley's text will be addressed in terms of sociological and social psychological traditions of *understanding* and *hermeneutic interpretations* („*Verstehen*“ and „*Deuten*“). Asking for irritations, for too obvious consistencies as well as inconsistencies in the text leads the way to a deeper understanding of biographical self-interpretations under the influence of social control. We learn about hidden aspects of Stanley's conflict-ridden subjectivity in relation to a social and institutional environment full of contradictions and conflicts as well.

Looking for unconscious aspects in the text is a methodological chance to overcome two perspectives which are too narrow. The first one would be to take the story *only* as a social construction, addressing a sociologist who wants to hear explanations for deviance. The second trap is to take Stanley's text as a real story where we can trace the reasons for his deviance (which is mostly done by the sociologists of his time). Instead of following a short handed social constructivism or repeating an essentialistic reading an in-depth hermeneutic approach is asking for latent aspects of social sense, not only from the angle of subjectivity but also from the angle of societal and institutional processes which are mirrored in the subject in a broken or detoured way. Therefore working with single cases is a very fruitful way of *understanding* mechanisms and effects of social control.