"Producing People" in Documents and Meetings in Human Service Organizations

Editors

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COGITATIO

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Editorial

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Abstract

This thematic issue is devoted to how human service work may be influenced by accentuated administrative processes, as well as reinforced by digitalization, in contemporary society. The public sector has expanded the requirements of documentation, auditing and evaluation practices. Policy, problems and persons are shaped and enacted in meetings and documents. Meetings and documents comprise the forum for making highly important decisions for the individual client or for various categories of clients. Still, people's participation in meetings and their reading and production of documents are often overlooked in studies of human service organizations. In this thematic issue, empirically-oriented researchers describe and analyze human service workers' administrative routines, particularly focusing on processes of client inclusion and exclusion.

Issue

This editorial is part of the issue "'Producing People' in Documents and Meetings in Human Service Organizations", edited by Malin Åkerström (Lund University, Sweden) and Katarina Jacobsson (Lund University, Sweden).

1. Introduction

An increasing proportion of working hours in many organizations is devoted to administrative tasks. In a number of studies of the public sector expanding requirements of documentation, auditing, and evaluation practices are investigated, discussed, and often critiqued. Technological advances reinforce the administrative escalation. Digital aids are used for information exchange and data gathering both for staff and patient: from dementia prevention apps and "doctors on-line" to electronic records systems or even more comprehensive digital systems. The increase of digital "tools" in human service organizations is sometimes captured in the term "welfare digitalization" (Jacobsson & Martinell Barfoed, 2019). Digital infrastructures enable large, wide-ranging data collections that can easily be transferred, processed, and transformed into numbers, tables, and graphs. Simultaneously, opportunities for evaluation and control are increasing: "What help, advice, or assistance is offered at the social service offices or emergency rooms? To whom and how often"? The work and effort of feeding these kinds of data to the digital systems are often time-consuming and sometimes technically challenging. Overall, administration is assumed to take time and commitment from what various professions believe is the core of their business (Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2014; Kello, 2015). Researchers are concerned that this development can lead to a de-professionalization (e.g., Evetts, 2009).

Several collaborative tendencies are believed to have paved the way for this development. New control mechanisms, as well as management methods in the public sector have been collected in terms such as New Public Management (Hood, 1991), Audit Society (Power, 1997),

and the Administration Society (Forssell & Ivarsson Westerberg, 2014). A parallel trend is the introduction of a so-called evidence-based practice in, most notably, health care and social work, promoted by the evidence movement, (e.g., Bohlin & Sager, 2011).

While this change is often explained as driven by pressure from above, we would claim that there are also self-generating forces, what Simmel (1978) referred to as *Eigendynamik*. We assume that successful dissemination of new administrative approaches can not only be explained by economic and ideological means of government from the state authorities. These self-generating forces may be seen in that meetings and documents are so closely linked as if they presuppose each other: meetings generate both new meetings and documents, documents generate both new documents and meetings. Furthermore, several researchers have observed the presence of meeting chains and document chains, which are initiated by the members themselves (Åkerström, 2019; Schwartzman, 1989). It is reasonable to assume that a social psychological aspect also plays a part, harbored in the administration's enticements and attraction. Such appeals are evident in internal processes such as opportunities for influence, collegial interaction, and demonstrated competence (e.g., Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012)—often performed with great emotional involvement.

Regardless of what this development is called, a practical consequence is that administration's two main ingredients—meetings and documents—are now accentuated in new ways: new meeting forms are being developed and refined in the meetingization process characterizing contemporary society (Hall, Leppänen, & Åkerström, 2019; van Vree, 2011), documentation is specialized, often in digital forms (Jacobsson & Martinell Barfoed, 2019). Policy, problems, and persons are shaped and enacted in meetings and documents. Meetings and documents comprise the forum for making decisions that might be highly important for the individual client or for various categories of clients. Still, people's participation in meetings and their reading and production of documents are often overlooked in studies of human service organizations. Furthermore, among professionals, these administrative tasks are often complained about and portrayed as the bureaucratization of human service work (e.g., Goldman & Foldy, 2015).

The social organization of human service work takes place in the office setting, not solely, or even most often, in encounters with clients. Whenever human service workers engage in a client case, they access an existing file or create a new one. Past records should offer convincing interpretations of current behaviors and circumstances. It is through text-mediated human service work that the case becomes visible (Prior, 2003). Cases are "talked into being"—people are produced (cf. Holstein, 1992)—in meetings and case conferences. Human service workers' tasks become visible through paperwork and meetings, and thus, accountable; that is, accounts

are formulated for both the client and the work performed. Nonetheless, some dimensions of human service and of the clients' narrated lives or conditions might be omitted or implicitly taken for granted.

2. Contributions

This thematic issue is devoted to how human service work may be influenced by the accentuated administrative processes in contemporary society. Researchers were invited to describe and analyze human service workers' administrative routines, particularly focusing on processes of client inclusion and exclusion. Different empirical cases are presented and analyzed. Most of the contributions concern human service workers' everyday administrative routines, and how they manage documents and meetings. A few contributions illustrate the contrast between interactions in a field setting with formulations in documents, administrative routines, or interactions in an office setting.

The topic we deal with in this thematic issue holds a number of relevant questions, for instance: how are provisions of care or definitions of problems "talked into being" and textualized in documents? Which clients are assigned to the "outside" and which are invited "inside"? How do meetings and paperwork interact in constructing client descriptions, social problems, solutions, and human service professionalism? In this issue, the problem of digitalized working methods runs like a ubiquitous thread through the practices of fitting clients' problems or staff's efforts into administrative routines. Human service staff paints a picture of how they sometimes engage in efforts of beating the systems, but mostly they criticize or exemplify how they are ruled by various electronic systems.

In these articles, there are many illustrations of how human service workers are disciplined by new ways of meeting and/or documenting. Consider the surveillance and regulating ways described in detail in the description by Hjärpe (2019) of the "pulse meetings" in a Swedish social work setting. The staff is required to meet regularly in front of a whiteboard:

> Every morning at 8 am, five work teams gathered around five whiteboards for a 15-minute meeting, standing on their feet. One manager explained: 'Sitting down would make the staff too comfortable' (Hjärpe, 2019, p. 188)

The study explores a number-based comparative logic where the social workers collectively compare their work in terms of how many cases they have handled. The numbers are seen as "productivity", as performance measures, but some staff engages in negotiations concerning the meaning and interpretation during interaction moments, and others convince managers to make changes in terms of what numbers to count.

Another disciplining trend in social work is the efforts of standardization, which in itself has a long history

in society (Busch, 2011). Studies of standardization-in-interaction (Maynard & Schaeffer, 2006) analyze the performance of the standard, the actions and interactions of the parties involved. Critics have found that the rigidities of standardization may lead to awkward interactions (Suchman & Jordan, 1990). Such difficulties can be seen in Martinell Barfoed's (2019) article. It is an illustration of how clients are constructed in the era of standardization, where Swedish social workers have to follow questionnaires in a uniform way, excluding possibilities of nuances. Furthermore, the technical changes through digitalization have given rise to the remarkable phenomenon of a digitally constructed client story.

Devlieghere and Roose's (2019) article also discusses digitalization but from the intersection of, at times, conflicting demands that human service workers currently face, namely transparency—that is, increased client participation and use of electronic information systems.

Transparency, in this Belgian child welfare context, concerns showing what is happening on the ground towards a diversity of organizations and people, including service users, colleagues, legislative bodies and the broader society. As only data submitted to the electronic system counts as relevant data, staff discovers how to circumvent the system. Paradoxically, the "transparency system" brings haziness to such cases.

Another dilemma is illustrated by Thedvall (2019) in her article on collaboration between municipal and state agencies (the Public employment agency and the Social services), and human service workers' efforts to transfer people through documents. The Swedish case she studied concerns an "activation policy" aiming to get people into work with the help of an instrument consisting of four separate documents. The four documents were constructed for assessing problems and suggesting plans for the future, and they were supposed to fit like cogs in an efficient process, filled in by the various staff at the different organizations, one after the other. It turned out that this process lacked the flow one had aimed for. One interviewee explained that they had hoped for a smooth routine when they mapped it out in a simple and logical way, but this "was one and a half years ago, she said, and since then we have been working to make it operational" (Thedvall, 2019, p. 223). During meetings, some of the problems were identified and resolved; meetings in this case functioned as "smoothing machines".

Meetings and documents interact in several ways, and Archer-Kuhn and de Villiers (2019) illustrate yet another in their investigation. They researched a professional development course in Canada, organized as a workshop meeting on how child protection service workers respond to domestic violence. The problem to be addressed was the tendency that mothers are singlehandedly held accountable for their children's welfare in such situations. Once gender norms were discussed and reflected on, according to this study, the child protection workers reported that they no longer wrote statements in the agency files to implicate mothers as solely responsible for child protection and that they include information about the father in the agency database.

Broerse (2019) investigates an aspect of integration work, namely a sport-based settlement service targeting newly arrived migrants in Melbourne, Australia, with a focus on staff meetings and productions of documents. These bureaucratic practices can have a profound impact on client categories and consequences for processes of exclusion/inclusion in these programs. At times, staff made efforts to beat the system by finding alternative solutions for some clients. In order to include more clients to the program, the "official system" could be circumvented by including a non-eligible client in the volunteer program instead, thereby avoiding registering the client in the electronic system.

3. Contrasting Cases: Interactions in a Setting

In the last two articles, interactions with clients are more visible. Wästerfors' (2019) article concerns the contrast between "writing practices" and re-narrated violent, multifaceted events in a Swedish juvenile center. It illustrates the complexities of clients' troubles and interactions between youngsters and staff, and how these are circumscribed and reduced in institutional journals, assessments, and case files. The casebook journal offers truncated versions, leaving out the involved youngsters' moral analyses, and seldom a fully understandable prequel regarding the events. In the journals, events might be summarized as, for instance, "before dinner, there is a fight on the TV sofa" (Wästerfors, 2019, p. 250), whereas the youngsters may account for who began and the prehistory of what is summarized as a "fight". Casebook journals are made up of running notes on care and surveillance that form material for upcoming placements and treatment programs. The writing method in institutions employs an individualizing gaze, depicting young people in care as troublesome clients, which will inevitably produce the "finding" that these are especially distressed individuals. As for conversations among themselves or with the field observer, staff does narrate alternative variants of conflict accountability, as well as address the institutional and social qualities of the narrated event. It is the written case book journals that do not seem to permit such interpretations.

The last article in this thematic issue is Emerson and Pollner's (2019) text, based on his and the late Melvin Pollner's work on American psychiatric emergency teams from the 1970s. More specifically, they studied social control decision-making in the field, illustrating the contrast between office work and in-the-field work settings. In the latter, interactions tend to become open, unpredictable, and at times even wild. In the office, client meetings take place on the human service workers' "home turf", and ensure, by its atmosphere, a ceremonial social control. Most of our contributions in this thematic issue tell about today's standardized form-filling activities that human service workers are engaged in. Emerson

and Pollner's article provides a dramatic contrast with the far less scripted interactions they illustrate. Here, human service workers in the neighborhood find themselves in a rather different office: negotiations take place in apartment corridors or office hallways, with the assistance of "capable guardians" or witnesses, such as concerned family members, friends, neighbors or landlords. On the client's turf, human service workers cannot rely on office routines or standardized documents but have to be skillful in gaining access to clients and their homes, "read" and adjust to present circumstances, and use situationally-sensitive practices, staying open for changing strategies momentarily.

We appreciate this last article most of all for illuminating these specific interactions and the contrast to office work, but also because it can stand as a model for other researchers: the gains of keeping and recycling "old data" (Wästerfors, Åkerström, & Jacobsson, 2014). Most qualitative researchers have projects where the empirical material may be old, but the analytic problems remain. In a research policy climate where funders insist on new and fresh data and references, it is worth remembering that much of our data harbor analytical puzzles that are more or less timeless.

4. Concluding Remarks

In this thematic issue, we have strived to capture a variety of fields and situations where people production occurs—often with the help of forms, digital tools, electronic systems, and different kinds of meetings. We have included studies from various parts of the world, illustrating how staff have to use standardized digital tools, but also ways in which human service workers engage in ways of getting around them. Furthermore, we have included contributions revealing the contrast to "desk-work" with work in the field or specific settings. We are thankful to the authors for making this variety possible.

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Article

Social Work on the Whiteboard: Governing by Comparing Performance

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Abstract

This article explores a number-based comparative logic unfolding around a particular kind of meeting in a social work setting: a daily and short gathering referred to as a "pulse meeting". At such meetings, staff gather around a whiteboard visualizing individual statistics in terms of the number of client meetings performed or assistance decisions made. The statistics function as a basis for further division of work tasks. As such, it is a particular way of representing what social workers do at work. Ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the social services revealed how such openly exposed individual performance and the related number-based comparative logic can trump alternative logics ranging from the overall collective performance, competing views on clients' needs and efficiency, and the social worker's sense of professionalism. When participants of the study compared themselves to each other and in relation to standards and goals, certain conclusions were drawn about what should be done by whom and in what order. Such conclusions became embedded in an objectivity status difficult for anyone to argue against. Finally, the number-based logic also found its way into the counter-practices formulated by social workers unsatisfied with what was visualized on the whiteboard.

1. Introduction

Different kinds of numbers are used in many different ways in modern professional practices, such as social work (Shore & Wright, 2015, p. 23). At an early planning stage, a social work organization may decide to send out a survey to do an inventory of needs to prioritize in a certain community. In direct client work, social workers use assessment forms to gather information about a client's social and psychological status. Time is measured in terms of the hours and minutes it takes for the elderly and disabled to shower or clean their house in order to calculate their assistance need. As employees, social workers themselves fill out work environment surveys and discuss the results presented in diagrams at staff meetings. Numeric information about anything from gender representation to the costs and effects of interventions are reported to management, politicians, and government authorities. As Kurunmäki and Miller

(2006) point out, to be able to work and operate in modern organizations, one needs to acquire an administrative and "calculating" knowledge. One needs to continuously use, interpret, compare, and value work with the help of numbers.

The role that measurements should have in social work practice is debatable. Measuring initiatives are often accompanied by efforts to gain objective and neutral knowledge—knowing "for real" as opposed to feeling and guessing (Martinell Barfoed & Jacobsson, 2012; Porter, 1994). Such efforts can be challenging, as the character and goals of this work are constantly changing, varied, nuanced, complex, vague, uncertain, and filled with conflicts and dilemmas (Parton, 1998). While some scholars, authorities, and practitioners invent and spread models for measuring new aspects of social work (e.g., Elg, Witell, & Gauthereau, 2007; National Board of Health and Welfare, 2014), others insist that such measurements reduce complexity (e.g., Liedman,

2013) and risk making robots out of the practitioners (Baines, 2006).

One specific way of using numbers in work settings is to measure and compare professionals' individual performances in order to monitor that work is done according to predefined and quantified standards and goals. A concrete example is to set a standard of how many clients a social worker should attend per day, and to connect funding to the level of compliance with the standard. This use of numbers as a governance tool directly affects professionals in their everyday work. It is described as something relatively new for the public sector, belonging to reforms called New Public Management (Hood, 1991) or managerialism (Pollitt, 1993). A metaphor often used to describe the content of such reforms is that managers start "steering the boat", focusing on goal fulfilment, instead of "rowing it" by focusing on quality in the processes. Rowing includes letting professionals' praxis implicitly define the standards, whereas steering implies formal and quantitative measures (Hood, 1991, p. 4).

Authorities and employers' organizations tend to argue that performance measures are a good way to guarantee transparency, value for money, and legal security (SALAR, 2014). On the other hand, studies point to several unintended or "perverse" effects of using such strategies to steer professionals, all relating to the saying "what gets measured gets done" (Bevan & Hood, 2006). Some examples are cherry-picking easily treated clients (Gilman, 2001, p. 601), double booking clients to achieve higher visiting rates (Gallina, 2010, pp. 2–4), "parking" clients in available programs rather than programs known to be efficient and worthwhile (Brodkin, 2011, p. 67), playing "tick-box games" when reporting statistics (McGivern & Ferlie, 2007, p. 1378), and staff developing a "silo-mentality" of being less inclined to collaborate with colleagues (Lodge & Gill, 2011, pp. 153–155).

The research mentioned above addresses restructuring changes in different professional contexts, such as management, health care, and social work, and commonly has the role of numbers and quantification to be one of several aspects distinguishing the reforms. This text takes a closer look at the function of numbers, in interactions, negotiations, and practices unfolding around performance measures in a social work setting. For this reason, the analyses will build on data on interactions at so-called "pulse meetings", at which managers gather their staff around a whiteboard visualizing individual performances and relating them to standards and quantified goals. This is a strategy rooted in "lean management", translating efficiency success from the car industry to public sector work, such as health care, social services, and education (Baines, Charlesworth, Turner, & O'Neill, 2014). While some studies have investigated consequences and changes related to performance measurements in social work practice (e.g., Abramovitz & Zelnick, 2015; Baines, 2006; Brodkin, 2011) and similar "whiteboard management", mainly in hospital settings (Hauge, 2016; Stray, Sjøberg, & Dybå, 2016), this study

particularly focuses interaction related to comparisons of professionals based on numerically described performance. As Espeland and Stevens (2008) point out regarding measurements in general, they are always socially transformative to some extent. Complexity is reduced to enable comparisons over time and between agents, and in the next step the comparisons lead to values and actions. The purpose of this article is to analyze what conclusions professionals draw and what actions they take when they are exposed to statistics at pulse meetings. More specifically, how is this visible in the participants' interactions? This focus resonates with other scholars (cf. Timmermans & Epstein, 2010, p. 78) highlighting the importance to empirically investigate and discuss expected, as well as unforeseen and unintended, consequences of governing initiatives containing different kinds of standards and numbers.

2. A Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Governing Number Practices

A sociology of knowledge and quantification perspective is of overall relevance to this study. As scholars writing from this standpoint (e.g., Best, 2001; Espeland & Stevens, 2008; Porter, 1994) commonly argue, I look at numbers and statistics as a knowledge form that is constructed and used for different purposes. What numbers reflect and represent is a product of social negotiation and interactive processes, and once produced they influence and affect their social surroundings.

From this perspective, questions can be asked regarding what is done with and accomplished by numbers, by whom and in what way (Espeland & Stevens, 2008). One of several approaches to these questions that has already been elaborated theoretically is that citizens in general and professionals in particular are "governed by numbers". Within this theoretical framework, statistics, indicators, audit projects, budgets, evaluations, standards, and ranking systems are seen as tools used by the government to discipline society, yet simultaneously "hide" or make the power exercise less explicit (Miller & Rose, 1990; Power, 2004; Rose, 1991). A common reference is Foucault's conceptualization of "governmentality" (Foucault, 1978/1991, p. 100), referring to a strong yet indirect and distanced form of political power, not least employed within neoliberal government (Dean, 1999, p. 1). Governmentality partly works through "government of the self", in which the above mentioned and often subtle tools create instructions on how to feel, think, and act. In this sense, one can say that professionals participate in governing over themselves (Rose, Valverde, & O'Malley, 2006. p. 89). In the analyses of this article, the whiteboard used for comparing performance is approached as such a tool.

At the same time, even though such governance projects are implemented "from above", their actual role, function, or meaning is achieved socially. What becomes of such initiatives is a result of negotiations,

adjustments, and translations to local practices, and there can also be resistance and countermoves (Saetnan, Lomell, & Hammer, 2011, p. 11). O'Malley, Weir and Shearing (1997, pp. 504–505) pointed out as a weakness in contemporary governmentality literature, the tendency to ignore the often messy, contradictory and tense reality where the governing takes place. Instead, intentions from government or management are put at the center and presented in schematic and abstract ways. Resistance from citizens or employees becomes a matter of obstacles, deviances or failures to be overcome, and is not seen as part of negotiations inherent to all kind of governing with potential to shape and influence the governments' intentions (O'Malley et al., 1997, p. 510). Thus, governmentality ideas have been criticized for downplaying the agency of the professionals and alternative approaches have been suggested (see Paulsen, 2014, pp. 39–72) in order to capture workplace resistance. Ackroyd and Thompson (1999, p. 6) who provided one such approach argued that even in organizational contexts where management and control systems are more sophisticated, resistance—or what they call misbehavior—takes on new forms rather than disappears. For the present study, recently developed ideas to study (among other things) workplace resistance, coined by Bruno, Didier and Vitale (2014) as "statactivism", have inspired the analysis. Statactivism is defined as "a particular form of action within the repertoire used by contemporary social movements: the mobilization of statistics" (Bruno et al., 2014, p. 198). The resistance strategies consist of countering a quantification stemming from the state, an authority or an organization's management, with alternative and affirmative or nuancing and questioning quantification. Within this framework authors have identified several more specific ways of using numbers to exercise influence "from below". Whereas the creators of the statactivist approach have an emancipatory purpose documenting those strategies (Bruno et al., 2014, p. 200), this article uses their framework for understanding the possibilities and limitations of this particular kind of resistance.

The above-mentioned ideas guide the analysis of this study in the way that practices in terms of reactions, actions, conclusions, clashes, and counter-practices to governing intentions are at the center of attention. In that sense, a theoretical contribution is made to governmentality theory through the identification of moments where governing intentions clashes with or are disrupted by resistance or alternative logics stemming from the social workers, as well as how such tension plays out in the everyday interaction.

3. Ethnographic Fieldwork in a Social Service Setting

With the overall aim to study practices unfolding around a governing initiative in a work setting, an ethnographic approach was selected as a research strategy (Neyland, 2008, p. 4). Over seven months in 2017 (from January to July) I conducted ethnographic field work (participant observations, interviews, documents, and photographs) at five different social service offices in Sweden. The aim was to identify and study situations in which participants interacted around numbers related to work performance. I shadowed managers participating in leadership courses, and I observed and interviewed social workers, administrative staff, and managers during "ordinary" work days. Out of the more comprehensive material from the fieldwork, this article draws on data from one of the studied units in which the management had taken inspiration from lean management. The data consist of field notes from five full-day observations, four individual interviews, two pair-interviews, and a selection of documents and photographs.

As a participant observer, I did not exclusively strive to be a "fly on the wall" or a fully participating member, which can be considered the two extremes within ethnography (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, pp. 1–3; Fine, 1993, p. 281). During observations, participation altered from at times being more restrained, in line with what Czarniawska (2007, p. 21) calls "shadowing", to other times being more active, including taking part in participants' discussions and decisions (Atkinson, 2015, p. 39). Strategic decisions about the level of participation were made situationally. An overall aim of using participation as a means to get access to participants thoughts and feelings (Fine, 1993, p. 282) had to be adjusted to what was possible in specific situations. At some occasions, as in smaller management meetings, a high level of participation seemed to make the participants more comfortable with my presence. In other moments, such as bigger staff gatherings including the "pulse meetings" to be described in the next section, less interference seemed expedient. Observations with a "passive" participatory approach enabled detailed field notes to be taken in place. When participation was more active, field notes had to be complemented afterwards.

During fieldwork I applied interviewing in two different ways. Combined with observations, "mini-interviews" were continuously conducted with several participants in order to enhance my own understanding of interactions taking place and how they were perceived by the participants. Such data were written down by hand, forming part of the field notes. Longer interviews were tape-recorded and made with the help of a thematic interview guide.

After transcribing interviews and field notes, a qualitative content analysis was initiated. In a first step, the data were thematically coded along several themes that had emerged during fieldwork, as well as when transcribing and reading the interviews and field notes. In a second step, the data were re-coded along a fewer set of selected themes. Even though the interest in "number-based governance" was present already at the beginning of the field work, the results presented in this article have emerged through a process of interpretation where data collection, the reading of previous research and theory,

and analyzing have been altered in a so called "iterative strategy" (Dellgran & Höjer, 2003, p. 11).

I have collected all the data used in this article, although being part of the research project "Documents, Forms and Paperwork—Expanding Documenting Practices in Health Care and Social Work" led by Katarina Jacobsson and Elizabeth Martinell Barfoed at Lund University in Sweden. The project has been approved by the Swedish Regional Ethical Review Board (Dnr 2013/348). I obtained access to the field initially by approaching representatives of the social services' management. Prior to the field work all participants were informed about the study, either at staff meetings or through internal e-mail correspondence. In the selection of participants for recorded interviews I strived to get a mix of managers and social workers, as well as participants with varying amount of years of experience in the field. It was voluntary for those asked to give the interviews and some declined with reference to heavy work load. In line with the codes of research ethics, already in the field notes and transcriptions, alternative names were given to the participants and the municipalities. All names appearing in this article, including the whiteboard on page 5, are fictitious. The observations have mainly been concentrated on the professionals and not the social work clients. When participants have been talking about clients, no confident details were written down.

The language in all of the gathered material is Swedish. For the present analysis, selected extracts of the data have been translated from Swedish into English by me.

4. Lean Management and the Function of Numbers

4.1. Whiteboard Statistics for Efficient Assistance Assessment

At the current social service unit, the social workers' main task was to assess clients' (elderly, disabled, and very sick people) rights to assistance in terms of home care activities (i.e., cleaning, shopping, going to bathroom) or shorter or longer stays in nursing homes. Approximately a year before the fieldwork, the management took inspiration from lean management to streamline and speed up the work. According to the management, problems motivating new strategies were high caseloads, long waiting times for clients, and an overall ineffective working culture in which the professionals watched their own territories instead of collaborating in an efficient way. Among other things the social workers struggled with completing required documentation on time and often had to push required follow-up visits into the future.

Briefly, lean management is an efficiency model used increasingly in public service organizations, the inspiration for which comes from success in the car industry (Baines et al., 2014). The model seeks increased productivity through the identification of "time thieves" and the most resource efficient way to complete tasks without negotiating quality. Standardization of time-frames, caseloads, and activities is the main strategy used to stimulate what is called "the flow", referring to a case's way through the organization. In the car industry this process, in terms of the "line of production", could be described as the steps running "from ordered to delivered car". The corresponding course for incoming cases at the current social service unit would be "from application to denial or followed up approval of assistance". The aim is for this process to run "smoothly" without friction and the quality of the product or service is guaranteed by the routinized procedures (Petersson et al., 2012, p. 51).

Michel Power (1997) explains that work or services in general can be judged, evaluated or audited based on different kinds of, and sometimes competing, logics such as its efficiency or its effectiveness (Power, 1997, p. 50–51). While the former is concerned with determining "value for money" in terms of ensuring maximum output from available resources, the latter is oriented towards evaluating if outcomes conform qualitatively to intentions, as defined in laws, policies and programs. In social work such outcomes can be ambiguous and controversial and are constantly being negotiated amongst professionals (Power, 1997, p. 117). Lean management honors routinized procedures, which are meant to guarantee quality. Still, the quality standards, for example in terms of caseload per social worker, specify a lower and an upper limit for how much work the social worker is allowed to invest in each case in order to keep the "production" at a high and steady pace. This makes the model more concerned with efficiency rather than with effectiveness.

Numbers have a distinguished role in lean management in the way that work content is described quantitatively and measured against quantified goals and standards. For example, standards for how much or how many meetings the professionals are expected to "produce" per day are established. Numbers are used to visualize how the staff is performing on an individual basis. A big whiteboard, or a "pulse-board", as the participants in this study called it, with such statistics is often put in a select place where staff can easily gather. It was described by a manager as a "visual protocol of decisions and ongoing activities". What is measured and visualized on the whiteboard varies according to the tasks being executed. At the current social service office, it even varied between the different teams into which the social workers were divided.

4.2. Taking the Pulse of the Social Workers

Every morning at 8 am, five work teams gathered around five whiteboards for a 15-minute meeting, standing on their feet. One manager explained: "Sitting down would make the staff too comfortable". For one team, the board looked like Figure 1 (after my reconstruction, translation and anonymization).

In the first column from the left, the social workers are listed by name, designating rows that account for ac-

Figure 1. Whiteboard for Team 2.

tivities scheduled for each day of the week. For example, Eva, who is listed first, will make one home visit on Monday at the same time as she is covering for Stig, who is ill. Jonna has planned to finish the documentation of one assessment as well as going on one home visit. The second column from the right indicates their respective "lag", representing the number of assistance decisions made but yet not documented. A standard was decided of maximum fifteen investigations "lagging" before the managers would actively "take action". Finally, the last column to the right states how many "follow-up-meetings" the social worker had completed so far that month.

Next to every social workers' name are marks representing the number of days that the social worker has covered for a colleague who is ill or had to take on an urgent matter. For example, Eva has covered for a colleague one day, whereas Viveka has covered for colleagues four days. The visualization of the extra burden of handling absent colleagues' tasks was an initiative from the staff and not part of the initial pulse board logic, something I will elaborate further below.

The pulse meetings are led by a front-line manager with the intention of "taking the pulse" of the staff. The manager asks every social worker about their plans for the day and if they need help. How they are performing in relation to the standards and compliance is routinely commented on and celebrated. Scrutinizing individual schedules helps the manager determine if work is equally distributed. If one of the social workers has a "calmer" day, the manager can actively engage him or her in helping a colleague who needs help. This strategy resonates with one of lean management's slogans, "putting the team first". According to this philosophy, the main

purpose is not to stimulate competition between social workers for individual gains, but to use it for work division for the team's common goal performance. Numbers are used for social control where work is divided based on a number-based solidarity.

Information about clients or the content and result of the activities performed is not exchanged at these meetings that strictly report performance in relation to standards and goals. For example, the manager does not ask questions about how a client is doing or what was decided at a home visit. Such information was addressed in other forums when necessary. In Hauge's (2016) words, this "whiteboard management" represents a specific way of visualizing and valuing work in organizations where parallel working value systems, related to professionals' traditions, norms and work ethics, exist.

5. Findings

5.1. Comparisons as Technologies of the Self

The pulse meetings can be viewed as an occasion for the management to check that the social workers read the information on the board correctly. Through a meeting ritual in which increased or improved numbers get praise and future activities are steered towards goal fulfilment, the manager gives clues as to what conclusions should be drawn. However, the actual comparisons started even earlier by the social workers themselves. Thoughts and ideas about what should be done by whom already appear in the earliest interaction between the observer and the board that seem to give silent instructions for actions. A simplified pulse board can serve our analysis (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Simplified whiteboard.

From a quick glance at the board, even an outsider can get some idea about the supposed work distribution. You may note that Lena should work on her lag and Stina on the follow-up visits. Stig, on the other hand, is on a good course and can feel satisfied for the moment. The social workers who have more information about the work may read something else from the board. Putting together different numbers into an overall work description, connecting them to the standards and goals, the picture becomes a bit more complex. They may conclude that Lena is behind because she has covered four times for a colleague, and that Eva is closer than the others to the standard limit for documentations lagging. In any case, the result is a determination of who needs to do what in what order. When the social workers look at the board and start comparing themselves to their colleagues, certain emotions seem to be created, which are reflected in the following quote from an interview with social workers Jeanette and Lidia:

> If you yourself have zero cases lagging it makes you happy. But if your colleague has zero while you have twenty, then it doesn't feel that good [laughs a little]. Then you feel like…damn it! (Social worker Jeanette)

Even though it is a hypothetical situation that Jeanette is describing, the point she is making is that she would give herself a lower ranking based on her relatively higher number of incomplete documentations. The connection is simple; feelings of being "superior" or "inferior" stem from having "more" or "less" than colleagues. That such emotions can be converted to initiatives to act is apparent in Lidia's posture later in the same interview. When asked if there were many negotiations regarding who should cover for a sick colleague, she answered: "No,

that is not necessary, it is visible on the board". Later in the interview she stated:

> You take a look at the pulse board and you see that someone else has covered two days for someone, and you know that you haven't covered yourself, it is natural to volunteer to cover the next time. (Social worker Lidia)

With the phrasing "it is natural to", Lidia presents the conclusion drawn in terms of offering to cover as something unquestionable and obvious. The examples above show how the numbers on the board create both emotions and actions, something that Foucault (1988) and his followers (see Rose et al., 2006, p. 89) may call "governing through technologies of the self". Some select and measurable aspects of the social workers' performances have been visualized on the board. Once the performances of the social workers are compared in this way, a valuation or rating can be applied (Espeland & Stevens, 2008). The fact that this can be purposeful in the governing of professionals is reflected in the following quote from an interview with case worker Lisa. It seems that she almost automatically, and by herself, draws the intended conclusions from looking at the board:

> I want to put an emphasis on the follow-up meetings, now that they are so visible. I mean, I knew before that I didn't keep up with them, but I pushed that stress away, but now you see it every day….My priorities have changed, now I want to be on time with what is visible on the board. (Social worker Lisa)

Lisa describes a switched focus and ascribes it to what is visible on the board, something that has given her guid-

ance. Just as Rosengren (2015, p. 12) points out, when work is characterized by tasks that are not easily measured, what still can be visualized, such as keeping standards, tends to get symbolic and high importance. It becomes a concrete way in which social workers can prove their engagement.

5.2. Collective and Individual Performance

As has been described earlier, team work is encouraged in models such as lean management in the name of efficiency (Baines et al., 2014, p. 447). Comparisons of social workers' performances are accounted for because it can enable a fair work distribution. At the same time, the exposed numbers seem to open the door to a distracted focus on personal performance in comparison to colleagues. In an observational study of pulse meetings in hospital settings, Stray et al. (2016) observed how the reporting and defending of individual work performance made employees uncomfortable while they simultaneously became more self-centered. Meetings were spent thinking about how to account for their own performance instead of participating in joint discussions. A similar process from my study shows that, for the individual social worker, their own performance can trump the collective effort as the motivating force. In one interview, social workers Tanja and Krister were discussing a feeling of satisfaction connected to improving ones' numbers when they are asked if it would feel just as good to change the numbers on the board if someone else had helped them out:

> Tanja: No, definitely not! Then it would not be my performance….I would have to be extremely overwhelmed with work to ask for help...

> Krister: Yes….I'd rather work overtime myself.

> Tanja: Yes...you always try to fix it yourself first, even in the second place you want to do it yourself, only thirdly I would ask for help. I mean, you want to do your job…

In this case, hypothetical numbers giving instructions to hand over cases to a colleague are described as a threat to the sense of "professional pride" reflected in Tanja and Krister's statements. In a study of Canadian social workers, Baines (2006) found different adaptive strategies for meeting requirements of quantified care plans while simultaneously fulfilling their own sense of professionalism towards the clients. One strategy was to work unpaid overtime, as is also mentioned in the above quoted interview, although from a slightly different standpoint: that of being one who "does her job". Krister and Tanja's aversion of letting go of cases illustrates their image of themselves as "performers". Parallel to management's goals of teamwork, there seems to be a strong individualized performance agenda.

Even though some sacrifices are described, such as working overtime, the actions taken in the examples this far are in line with the management's intentions. The respondents describe getting stressed when lagging behind and generally seem to read the board according to intentions. The respondents all possess the ability to compare and calculate their own and others' performances. In other words, they have developed what Kurunmäki and Miller (2006, p. 88) call "calculating selves", postures that modern organizations seek and value. The governing by numbers can be said to run smoothly. However, this was not always the case, and the front-line managers had to take on the role as mediators of the numbers. This is the theme of the next section, in which social worker Vera argues against the messages of the pulse board and offers persistent resistance.

5.3. Arguing over Numbers

Social worker Vera acted with reluctance towards the instructions on the pulse board. She did not seem to feel stressed by numbers indicating that she was far behind in her documentation work, and she did not want to hand over cases to a colleague in order to fulfil the administrative requirements. This frustrated the managers and, at one pulse meeting, manager Pelle took on the role of spokesperson for the numbers. In a long discussion between Pelle, Vera, and her teammate Susan, Pelle continuously referred to Vera's comparatively "bad" statistics in order to influence her priorities, starting with:

> Pelle: Yes, yes. I am thinking that all the new cases coming in should be Susan's, since you have nineteen ongoing cases and Susan has sixteen, and on top of that you have ten [points hard at the number ten on the board, making a sound] documentations lagging and Susan has zero. We have to look at the numbers and compare.

> Vera: But I gave you one case, right? [turning to Susan]

> (Field note from pulse meeting, continues)

According to Pelle, the board shows that Vera should not take on any new cases. Vera tries carefully to nuance the statistics on the board. The statement that Susan already has gotten one of her cases is another way of saying that her statistics are not as bad as they look. Later in the dialogue, she similarly argues that she has cases that will soon be closed that will make her results look better. In the continuous dialogue, when Pelle suggests that she should hand over some cases, and Susan volunteers to take two of her documentations, Vera's response is:

> Well, I understand that Susan wants to help me, but I thought that maybe we can solve this another way, because I don't think it's good if we mix the cases. The whole idea with creating our team was continuity

for the clients. If she starts taking cases from me and I from her, I don't think it is good for the clients, and also not time-wise, because I will have to be at even more different places. I will be running around everywhere! (Field note from pulse meeting, continues)

Two arguments are put forth in this phrase. First, in terms of what could be framed as a client perspective, referring to "the continuity for the clients". If they mix cases the client will get different social workers to whom they must relate. Furthermore, Vera perceives it as impractical and difficult for herself, as she'll be "running around everywhere". However, none of these arguments had any effect on Pelle, who keeps on referring to the numbers:

Pelle: Ok, so how are you going to solve it then, because you are not performing well here, Vera!

Vera: Hm, ok, Susan can take the applications to private nursing homes, I don't care as much about them.

Pelle: Then it is decided. And by tomorrow I want those numbers to be more equal. Do you feel OK with this Vera?

Vera: Well, I actually don't want to let go of my cases, I want to be able to make it on my own

(Field note from pulse meeting)

Finally, a statement is released that may be the most essential one in relation to Vera's reluctance, something we might call "professional pride", when she says: "I don't want to let go of my cases, I want to make it on my own".

To summarize, in at least four different ways Vera argues against Pelle in order to keep on working according to her own plans: that the numbers do not reflect her "real" work load, that it is not good for the clients' continuity to switch social workers, that it is not practical for her and Susan, and finally a reference to professional pride and responsibility. Vera offers resistance consisting of not accepting and even offering alternative interpretations to the one presented by the pulse board. Even though she eventually compromises partially, it is with reluctance and there is no sign that she accepts the logic of the numbers. Pelle does not respond with counter-arguments to these substantive questions, but keeps on referring to the numbers, which he uses "factually": "I mean we have to look at the numbers and compare". The numbers seem to be above all other circumstances that can potentially explain why Vera has bad statistics. It becomes a matter of Vera's "subjective qualitative arguments" against Pelle's "objective numbers argument".

As Porter (1994, p. 225) points out, what appears objective always means that someone has to sacrifice some kind of meaning. In this case, Vera has to sacrifice the control she wants over her cases. However, several arguments, values, and positions as subjective as Vera's can be found behind the numbers on the board, in the managements' rhetoric, and decisions on how to measure. For example, I described earlier how managers talked about social workers "watching their own territory", which they thought counteracted fair resource allocation. What is really at stake then are different and conflicting views on how to prioritize in which one side (social worker) highlights professional ambition and responsibility, user continuity, and pragmatic reasons for the professional, and the other side (management) highlights efficiency and equal distribution of resources. The numbers create the gap, enabling the conflict to never reach the surface. Considering the pulse boards in these examples as Foucauldian "governmentality tactics" (Foucault, 1978/1991, p. 95), the dimension that the actual governance is somewhat hidden can be added. It is obvious that a governance is happening, but not as obvious is who is governing based on what arguments. The numbers speak for what Pelle perceives as a problem and give him the legitimacy he needs. Against this background, the numbers appear as particularly efficient tools for everyday governance of social work practice.

6. Internalization and Countermoves from the Social Workers

Yvonne reads out loud what the two social workers who are ill today had planned in in their schedule. "Who can cover for Petra today?" Someone offers to take Petra's phone but cannot take the home visit. Someone else offers to do it. Yvonne writes on the board who covers for what activity. She puts a mark next to one of the names. One social worker asks: "Do you get a mark just for one home visit?" Yvonne answers: "Yes, I think so", and the social worker again: "Well, I just want to make sure we all do the same, because yesterday, I didn't get a mark". Yvonne changes her mind: "No, you're right", and she erases the mark. (Field note from pulse meeting)

After the pulse boards had been used for several months, the social workers came up with the suggestion that they should also visualize how many times per month one had covered for a colleague. This was only one of several aspects the social workers thought resulted in unfair comparisons. For example, some stated that: "The numbers are misleading, one assessment can take half an hour, others you are stuck with for weeks", or "Just because you have zero lags it doesn't mean that the documentations are of quality", as this could be a result of "sloppy" work. One social worker, who was responsible for quality control and development at the department, explained how she could get suspicious when colleagues repeatedly showed "too" good numbers. When examining their documentations, she often found them to be of lower quality than the others, she stated.

Thus, the social workers in my study were not governed by the numbers without any reflection or resis-

tance. They were attentive to and had opinions about what was visualized and compared on the board, and continuously came up with suggestions for improvements, as in the example with the marks. A reduction in perceived complexity was met with nuancing statistics. Several authors have expressed and given examples of "what is counted is what counts" (Bevan & Hood, 2006). This means that a good strategy may be to create measurements that serve your own interests. When what is visualized in numbers becomes important, it also becomes a matter of power and influence to take part in the decisions about what should be measured and how (Best, 2001). Bruno et al. (2014) called this type of countermove or numeric answers to someone else's quantification "statactivism", within a strategy they call "disclosure". The purpose of the move in this case is to question or nuance what is selected as important facts by the management, "it is the number of cases, lags, and follow-ups that best describe the work load of the social workers", which the social workers want to nuance with the answer: "It is also important how many times one covers for a colleague since this can affect your own statistics". This is a clear example of how negotiations around numbers occur, as it is important what they show, or what part of reality they visualize.

However, it is worth noting that, even though the example shows that the social workers want to participate in setting the rules of the game, it is still the game that the managers have chosen to play. The countermove does not question the game per se, but rather confirms and strengthens it. When the activities that the management chose to visualize on the board were not perceived as fairly reflecting the work distribution, a countermove was made in terms of an addition to the model, instead of resisting it.

7. Summary and Discussion

Building on data from ethnographic fieldwork I have investigated practices unfolding around performance measurements in a social work setting. The analysis showed how comparisons based on social workers' relative statistics can become a steering logic, guiding participants' actions. Firstly, it was illustrated how certain conclusions leading to actions are almost automatically drawn from the numeric information presented on the board. When participants of the study compared themselves to each other and in relation to standards and goals, conclusions were drawn about what should be done by whom and in what order. The particular visualization of the work offered by the whiteboard was illustrated as important and motivating for some social workers. Secondly, I showed how the number-based comparative logic could take precedence as a driving force. This was partly apparent in respondents' postures reflecting "pride" in accounts about rather working overtime than handing over cases to colleagues, and partly in an interaction where a social worker was given instructions with

repeated reference to comparatively unfavorable numbers. The number-based comparative logic had become embedded in an objectivity status, trumping any argument suggesting acting otherwise.

However, challenging theoretical approaches and studies showing how modern management and control systems become more sophisticated, leaving marginal space for discretion and resistance, I could also identify at least two different ways in which the intentions with the pulse boards were challenged and where the "governing by comparing" was, at least partially, interrupted. To start with: alternative logics to the one of the pulse board were proposed. At occasions where the numbers gave instructions for social workers to "hand over cases", alternative logics related to the well-being of the client, practicalities of the overall work situation and professional values stating the opposite; "don't mix the cases", were put forward. The second interruption visible in my data came from a more "internalized" standpoint when the social workers perceived the numbers as reductive of the complexity in their work and chose to make a numerical addition to the model. This is an initiative that in one way reveals an acceptance of describing the work quantitively including exposing it on the whiteboard. At the same time, the pulse board logic is challenged by their claim that there is a larger and more complex story behind the numbers and that they want to be a part of the choices made about what to measure. In a critique of theoretical approaches in the governmentality tradition, O'Malley et al. (1997, p. 510), among others, called for studies illuminating contestation, resistance and negotiation in the typically messy and unpredictable reality where governing happens. Even though no social worker in this study totally refused to participate in the comparative, numeric model, I have found examples of intentions to resist and negotiate in order to shape and influence the governing initiatives through provision of alternative interpretations and logics.

Out of the resistance strategies appearing in this article, the second one, in which the professionals themselves applied quantification, seems to have been more successful than resistance towards the model as such. At the same time as this made the exercise of influence possible, it also meant accepting a new language and a new logic for understanding and visualizing social work. Empirical research of the use of this language, and resistance towards using it, are important topics for future studies.

A final conclusion is that concerns about the pros and cons of the measurements diverted attention from client-focused work tasks. Questions concerning how the social workers should relate to clients were overshadowed by aspects of how the work should be measured and reported. For example, it is hard to imagine that the added marks on the board have any meaning outside of the internal work group. Previous studies have illuminated such attention displacement at national and supra-organizational (Bejerot & Hasselbladh, 2013) and orga-

nizational management levels (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011). Based on my study, similar results can be added from the everyday perspective of the social worker.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Digital Clients: An Example of People Production in Social Work

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Abstract

Digital work has become part of social workers' daily routines in countries where digitalisation is on the agenda. As a consequence, documentation practices are expanding—on paper as well as digitally—and include reporting detailed statistics about client interventions, filling in digital forms, and fulfilling local and national performance measurement goals. Standardised formulas with tick-box answers, fed into databases by the social worker, are examples of this digital endeavour. One example is the Addiction Severity Index (ASI), a questionnaire for estimating the client´s life situation and needs, used in addiction care. However, difficulties in making the social workers use the results of the standardised questionnaire in social work investigations, where a storied form is traditionally preferred, have made social workers reluctant to use them. To encourage the use of the ASI, a software program was invented to transform the binary data from the questionnaire into a computerised storyline, imitating the storied form. The aim of this article is to describe the context of the digital storyline production and to analyse the particular type of "digital client" it creates. Possible consequences are discussed, such as the absent (or distorted) client voice. It is proposed that documentation systems, in whatever form, should not be regarded as neutral carriers of information, but must be analysed for how clients are (re)presented and, ultimately, how social work is consctructed.

Keywords

digital storytelling; digitalisation; documentation practices; narrative; people production; social work practice; standardisation

Issue

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1. Introduction

Digitalisation is changing how human service work is conducted. In Sweden, as well as in many other countries, a great deal of effort and high expectations is put into digitising social work. From national authorities, ideals like efficiency, quality and user participation are buzz words surrounding the digital endeavour (e.g., SALAR, 2019). Many professions in human service work, for example, doctors, nurses, teachers, and psychologists, are not only affected by, but deeply involved in, the digitalisation project. Social workers with administrative positions, often called controllers, a title borrowed from the economic sector, are employed to carry out 'digital accounting', instead of working with clients (cf. Martinell Barfoed, 2018).

Digital changes evoke reactions; one example is the introduction of decision-making robots in a few Swedish social services (and many more planned), for persons seeking economic support. On the one hand, this development has made skeptical social workers quit their jobs in protest. On the other hand, the robots are defended as less time-consuming (Svensson & Larsson, 2017); providing time for better targeted client work—helping where help is needed. However, digital work, in general, has not been regarded as a time-saver: human service professionals, for example doctors, nurses, teachers, psychologists, and social workers, have voiced their concerns about less time spent with patients and clients and more time spent reporting statistics and filling in forms (examples regarding social work include: Abramowitz & Zelnick, 2015; Baines, 2006; Gillingham, 2016; Gillingham &

Humphreys, 2010; Hjärpe, 2017; Lauri, 2016; White, Hall, & Peckover, 2009; White, Wastell, Broadhurst, & Hall, 2010).

Digital documentation systems have consequences at different levels. Skillmark (2018) argues that increased standardisation is a way for social workers to seek legitimacy as well as claiming jurisdiction, and hence, to increase professionalism. At the managerial level, guiding, controlling, and measuring how professionals perform their work are central features (Rogowski, 2011). However, the digital changes also have consequences for how the daily work is conducted, for example, how the interaction between the social worker and the clients unfolds, and how collaboration with colleagues and paperwork is organised (Jacobsson & Martinell Barfoed, in press; Martinell Barfoed, 2018). Timmermans and Epstein (2010) noted that there are few empirical studies about the consequences of standardisation in the public sector and, therefore, propose an empirical bottom-up approach to shed light on this phenomenon. This relative lack of empirically grounded research also includes digitalisation.

Based on a digitally produced paper-client used in the Swedish social services, the aim of the article is to reflect upon how clients in social work are constructed, when forms and questionnaires are part of everyday practice. The example sheds light on how a computer software program is transforming binary data from a standardised interview into a storyline. Thus, the data are modelled into a written story by the computer. The resulting story can be described as a "digital client". Prior (2003) has proposed that documents should be regarded as carriers: when analysing documentation systems, it is not sufficient to focus on the content—attention also needs to be given to the context of its production (Bowker & Star, 1999; Prior, 2003). In this article, the context refers to the actions surrounding the standardised assessment tool Addiction Severity Index (ASI). More specifically, one of its parts, the "computerised" storyline, is analysed and some of the consequences are discussed.

1.1. A Changing Professional Context

The consequences and the challenges of the changes in welfare services have been addressed at length and, therefore, are only briefly mentioned here. The organisational changes brought about by New Public Management (Hood, 1995), including the outsourcing of welfare, privatisation, and fine-grained economic steering, are often proposed to explain this drive. Another explanation is the push for evidence-based human service work (Sackett et al., 1996). Digitalisation and standardisation tie in well with how the welfare state is currently guiding human service work. Quantification, or governing by numbers (Rose, 1991), is part of the changes in, for example, social work, where the national authorities are making professionals accountable for their work, resulting in monitoring and detailed guidance and reporting of how

well the work is performed. This development is said to produce management bureaucracies (Hall, 2012), where local answers (statistic production, outcome reporting, etc.) to national questions ("How are you performing?"), take a lot of time.

Social workers have been rather reluctant to see the potential of the digital technology of a later date, for example, information communication systems (Devlieghere, 2017). While some are in favour of this digital development, others raise their concerns about a more bureaucratic and instrumental social work (e.g., Abramowitz & Zelnick, 2015; Baines, 2006; Gillingham, 2016; Gillingham & Humphreys, 2010; Hjärpe, 2017; Lauri, 2016; White et al., 2009). In an ethnographic childcare study in England and Wales, where the Integrated Children's System (ICS) was investigated, White et al. (2010) found that the social workers reported spending between 60% and 80% of their working time at the computer, not counting travelling time and meetings (confirmed by observations).

Whether social workers are reluctant with regards to digitalisation or not does not seem like the important question today—the digital information systems are spread in social work worldwide (e.g., Devlieghere, 2017; Gillingham, 2011; Munro, 2005; Parton, 2008). In Sweden, the first wave started in the late 1990s, where standardised assessment instruments like the ASI were introduced on a small scale, after cooperation between national authorities, implementation researchers and computer experts. Risk assessment tools and other digital decision-making templates and formulas then followed, many of them shaped after international models, but others being nationally constructed.

The second digital wave is still in the making. Today more comprehensive classification systems are introduced, with a wider scope. One example is *The Classification of Health and Functioning (ICF)*, published by the World Health Organization in 2001 (a 276-pages-long catalogue of classifications), which is proposed to be used in varied settings (WHO, 2001). The use of the ICF has been studied in Swedish social work—it turned out to be difficult to adjust individual service user's needs to the fixed format of the ICF (Jacobsson & Martinell Barfoed, in press, pp. 83–84). Achieving answers to the questions was not a straightforward process, but rather an interactional accomplishment. The attention lied heavily on the template, demonstrating the authority of the document (cf. Zimmerman, 2016).

In Sweden, digital tools and classification systems in use are often based on international models. Sometimes a slight adaption is needed; for example, a question about snuff (widely used in Sweden) in the ASI questionnaire, had to be slightly modified by the National Board of Health and Welfare. Locally constructed digital tools are also found in the "Methods guide", where social workers can pick and choose among existing digital decision-support tools (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2018).

The changing professional context in social work not only has bearing on how social work is performed but also poses theoretical challenges. In an ethnographic study of social work in Australia, Gillingham (2016) found that standardised techniques shape the user and that the actions following the digital changes—digital reporting, extended paperwork, and standardised meetings over pre-formulated questionnaires—change how the social workers conduct their work and even think. By using a similar logic, we can presume that the professional tools and working methods utilised influence how the client is presented and constructed in investigations and case files. Hence, the form itself can be regarded as a carrier that transforms, in this case, social work practice (cf. Prior, 2003). Gillingham's conclusion can seem overly deterministic. Harold Garfinkel (1967a) ironically reminded us that people are not "dopes" and may act even under constraining structures. Research in social work demonstrates that creative strategies are used even when strict standardised routines are supposed to be followed. Björk (2016) noted how social workers act when conflicting interests arise between a standardised protocol and more acute client needs. The client is often found to have the upper hand when this occurs. In a study in England, similar strategies were used. The individual social worker sometimes added comments in a more narrative style in the margins of the standardised formulas they were filling in (White et al., 2009). The standardised form is sometimes presented as being easier to use, guiding the social worker with a fixed set of boxes to tick. However, a Swedish study found that it is not always possible to be "creatively professional". The standardised form is at times difficult to answer and the social worker and the client put a lot of effort into asking and answering the questions (Martinell Barfoed, 2018).

Lipsky (1980) called public administrators, like social workers, street-level bureaucrats, using their discretionary power when conducting their work, squeezed in between organisational and professional considerations. Bovens and Zouridis (2002) foresaw that the information and communication technology would turn the street-level bureaucrat into a system-level bureaucrat while handling the demands of (digital) information systems. They argued that three groups of employees would benefit from this development: (1) system designers and legal policy staff, (2) the managerial level; and (3) public information officers, informing and handling information and complaints. Similar tendencies may be observed in Swedish social work: In an ethnographic study in the social services, by Jacobsson and Martinell Barfoed (in press), new administrative positions, like controllers (with a social work degree) and data specialists, were found to be key players in the digital work conducted at the social services. In addition, they were often strategically placed close to the managerial level, thus giving a certain status to the new positions, compared to traditional social work.

1.2. Producing People

The analysis draws on two related theoretical perspectives. James A. Holstein's (1992) analytical framework has been helpful in showing how human service professionals are actively shaping and constructing their clients, or "producing people". Another theoretical viewpoint more specifically sheds light on how written forms and templates are influencing professional practice (e.g., Gillingham, 2016; Gillingham & Humphreys, 2010; Gubrium, Buckholdt, & Lynott, 1989; McLean & Hoskin, 1998; White et al., 2009). Both perspectives are founded in the sociology of knowledge and social constructionism, where "facts" are not regarded as stable and definite, but instead are constructed or "worked up" at any given time and in any context (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Smith, 1974). In some empirical examples given in this article, constructing "out-there-ness" (Potter, 1997) is a way to handle the standardised formula. This can be done in different ways. One is to avoid embarrassing questions, by blaming them on the national authorities or an unknown producer. Another is, as we will see, to openly complain about a difficult or "strange" question during the interview; questions that can cause problems to both the interviewer and the interviewee (Martinell Barfoed, 2018).

Holstein expands on Yeheskel Hasenfeld's (1972) and Jeffrey M. Prottas's (1979) concept of people-processing. Hasenfeld and Prottas alike analyse and theorise on how people are processed in human service organisations and how this is accomplished: citizens becoming clients during this process (Prottas, 1979, p. 163). Holstein (1992) argues that people are not merely processed (passively), but rather they interact (actively) with the organisation and its representatives. Hence, the individual is not only processed within the constraints of a given institution but is actively constructed during this process. The individual does not have a fixed and stable identity when entering the institution; instead, identities are formed during the everyday actions and interactions taking place. Holstein stressed the importance of language in this production and proposed that the descriptions and narratives circulating in any professional discourse produce the client (Holstein, 1992). This "people production" is situated, that is performed during the daily activities at the institution. In the digital age, people production can be explored in different ways. In this article, some empirical examples are given to highlight and reflect upon a computerised digital story, which has entered Swedish social work in recent years.

When a document is empirically investigated, instead of finding an insignificant piece of paper, Prior (2003) finds a carrier with an impact on how professional practice is formed. For example, seemingly trivial and simple questions and answers cannot be taken out of context; the "facts and information" produced in social work are embedded in contextual factors, for example, complex life experiences, narratively arranged in personal

stories, or written in notes and documents. After extensive ethnographic research in the USA, Gubrium et al. (1989), found that forms are highly influential in professional practice. Thus, completed forms are not simply a report of "what happened"; the report of any action is transformed when the form specifies what is to be filled in (White et al., 2009). McLean and Hoskin (1998) argue that forms and templates, instead of being objective, affect outcomes through their handling and the choices that are made when using them. They suggested that there are multiple influences involved in creating standards, with different agendas (cf. Bowker & Star, 1999); however, this tends to be ignored and the instruments are thought to be objective. Lampland and Star (2009) have elaborated upon the tension between visibility and invisibility in standardisation. On the one hand, the standardised form is something highly material, with a fixed set of questions and answers, and step-by-step manuals guiding how to use them. On the other hand, the background of their production is obscured. Important choices, negotiations, disputes, and power plays among the persons involved, in the often tedious work creating them, are not known to the users—to them, the standard is presented as "a fact producing facts" (Lampland & Star, 2009). The "plain-fact"-status and authority documents that are given in a public welfare agency often contrast with the skepticism the applicant's verbal claims are met with (Zimmerman, 2016). White et al. (2009) found that forms restrict social workers from providing more fluent descriptions; instead, the picture is restrained, and ambiguous and competing versions are suppressed. Gillingham (2016) even argued that standardised assessments "configure" the social worker and how the client is represented. At the same time, the circumstances of their production are often invisible. During fieldwork, it was found that neither the clients, nor the social workers, had knowledge of how the standard came about, as well as the work and negotiations behind them (Jacobsson & Martinell Barfoed, in press).

Standardisation has a long history in society (Cicourel, 1964). Studies of standardisation-in-interaction (Maynard & Schaeffer, 2006) analyse the performance of the standard, the actions and interactions of the parties involved. Critics have found that the rigidities of standardisation lead to awkward or even bizarre interactions (Cicourel, 1964; Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000; Martinell Barfoed, 2018; Suchman & Jordan, 1990). When standards on a large scale are introduced in social work it is important to study different aspects of how standardisation fits into their work, for example, how the standards are launched by national authorities (Jacobsson & Martinell Barfoed, 2012).

One example of how children are "made and managed" in social work is given in an ethnographic study from England. Peckover, White and Hall (2010, s. 381) explored how an e-assessment system for children was implemented and found both technical and moral dimensions concerning its use. The technical issues included "the production of inaccurate data, poor searching techniques, and issues associated with accessing or using computers". In addition, moral dimensions were inherent; when information was shared by professionals in child welfare, judgements about what constituted a concern about a child, consent, security, and accountability, surfaced.

2. Empirical Examples: Background

In the article, standardised and digitised tools used by social workers in decision making are highlighted. The use of other important digital devices embedded in institutional organisations, such as social media, e-mails, and smartphones, are left out, even though they are also members of the digital family (cf. Svensson & Larsson, 2017).

For this analysis I use empirical examples from a study on standardisation in social work as a point of departure; the examples were chosen because of their digital embeddedness. In the first example, a digital client story—"Data-Dennis"—is produced by a software program using binary data in a standardised form (ASI). In the research project, the standardised assessment form ASI was studied between 2010 and 2013. Participants were observed during 12 tape-recorded ASI interviews. The interviews were regarded as naturally occurring talk and as an interactive accomplishment (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1986; for more detail see Martinell Barfoed, 2018). In addition, interviews with social workers, clients and computer system developers were conducted at probation offices and at the social services. In this research project "sitting-in" (Jacobsson, 2016) during the ASI interview gave important field notes, in addition to the tape-recording of the interaction between the social worker and the client.

In the final part of the research project, digitalisation was changing social work in many ways, for example, private companies were offering digital support to social services. To understand more about the digital data support, qualitative interviews were conducted with two IT-workers, owners of a company licensed to handle the ASI-data from the local authorities (Martinell Barfoed, 2018). During the interviews, conducted by a colleague and me, the computer workers gave an example of a digital innovation: a software program transforming the binary data from the ASI interview into a digital storyline. At first, we thought the fictitious written document given to us, named "Dennis", was an example of what the computer could do. A couple of years later, it turns out that most Swedish local authorities use this software program (as per a telephone contact with IT worker 2, December 2018). Therefore, it is interesting to reflect upon this rather reversed way of handling client data (and clients) in social work: on the basis of the questionnaire data, the software program turns binary codes into a narrative for the social worker to copy into the investigation. To better understand the data that Dennis's story is built

upon, an empirical example from one of the interviews in the ASI-project is given. The example is chosen to match Dennis's storyline. We begin with a short description of the ASI.

2.1. The ASI: A Digital Tool

The ASI is called a standardised assessment "instrument" and it is well-known globally (McLellan, Cacciola, Alterman, Rikoon, & Carise, 2006). In Sweden, 70% of the clients in addiction treatment within the social services have been subject to the ASI interview (Lundgren et al., 2012). Originally, the ASI was designed for measuring the effects of alcohol and drug use, starting in the mid-1960s, and first aimed at Vietnam veterans in voluntary care (McLellan et al., 2006).

The ASI consists of four different parts: (1) a basic ASI interview between a social worker and a client, (2) a follow-up interview between a social worker and a client, (3) reporting the data to a database (social worker), and (4) transforming the binary data into a storyline (computer). The basic interview is a questionnaire consisting of 180 questions. In a personal interview, the social worker asks the questions and the client answers. The aim is to investigate and measure addiction habits and identify needs and risks. A given set of life areas are worked through, in the following order: (1) physical health, (2) work and income, (3) alcohol use, (4) drug use, (5) family and socialising, (6) problems with the law, and (7) mental health issues (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2014). Most questions are answered with "yesses" and "nos" in "tick-boxes". The problems are then graded by the client as well as the social worker. The social worker then chooses the final gradings in the different life areas. The second part of the ASI, a shorter follow-up interview, is conducted six to eight months after the basic interview. As the aim of the ASI is to measure drug habits and life situation, the second interview is important as a point of reference. However, this follow-up interview has turned out to be difficult to accomplish. When the laboratory logic of the ASI meets the logic of care, the latter often has the upper hand (Björk, 2016). The social worker has to adapt to the client and acute situations must be solved. The ASI-questionnaire becomes a second priority when, for example a client is hospitalised or homeless. Therefore, lower usage of the follow-up interview is reported (Björk, 2016).Björk, 2016 In the third part of the ASI, the data produced from the interviews are reported to a national database, managed by a private company, where the Swedish local authorities have paid access to different support tools. Finally, the fourth step is when the computer, after the social worker has entered the binary data by using a software program, transforms the results from the ASI interview into a computerised storyline.

The ASI is supposed to provide different answers, such as individual needs of care, data at an organisational level, and aggregated data at a national level. The data can also, after obtaining written permission from the local authorities, be used for research (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2014). The ASI is an example of the "multifunctionality" of the digital tools entering public service organisations (Mäkitalo & Säljö, 2002). In a Swedish study of a categorisation system for the un-employed, Mäkitalo and Säljö (2002) find that categorisation serves diverse functions at different levels. The needs of the individual client, organisational demands, statistics to be filled out, etc. Different agendas were linked to the different actors involved. The professionals were well aware of this complexity, and therefore, when the clients were categorised into fixed categories, they were reflexively juggling the diverse demands and the consequences of their choice of category. The authors conclude that categorisation practices are hidden, that is, not visible to the public, but that they are still central features when social facts are produced.

3. Analysis and Discussion

In this part, two empirical examples are presented and analysed to illustrate the consequences of the digitised documentation practices. First, a short background about the design of the computer-generated narrative is given. Second, a computer-generated narrative is presented, analysed, and discussed. Third, interactional data from an ASI interview shows how the question and answer-interaction unfolds to shed light on what kind of data the computer-generated narrative is built upon.

3.1. A Computer-Generated Narrative Is Designed

An early problem, which initially gave the Swedish national authorities launching the ASI difficulties, was to motivate social workers to use the results from the ASI interview in their investigations. The results, given in binary codes (1s and 0s), were difficult to use in the narratively structured investigation, therefore social workers were somewhat reluctant in feeding the data into the ASI-database (Björk, 2016). Traditionally, the story has had a strong hold in social work discourse (cf. Hall, 1997). It turned out that the figures did not match the investigation format and the social workers in this sense had "good reasons" for "bad practice". (cf. Garfinkel, 1967b) The problem had to be addressed. A software program was designed, by two Swedish ASI-pioneers. The program turned the codes into a storyline, to meet the need for a more human-like narrative that better served the social work investigation. One of the computer developers explains in an interview:

> The ASI interview itself is...you fill in 1s and 0s and so on. Then, in the ASI-net [a database where the results are fed in after the interview] you get a fluent narrative. So, if you fill in: "Man, 32 years old, Peter", the narrative will say: "Peter is 32 years old, and comes from Stockholm" etc., etc. (IT worker 1, May 2012)

This computer-generated storyline was designed to make the use of the results of the ASI interview more attractive for the social workers. The colleague explains:

> [The social workers] want to get this text compilation that they are using in the ongoing investigation. You know, there is always an investigation going on in Procapita or TreServa or The Umbrella, whatever it [the system] is called. And this text compilation has to be written. It must be part of the investigation, so….Today, the ASI-net [more exact, a particular program in this database] spits out a text, and they can almost momentarily "copy and paste" the story into the investigation. (IT worker 2, May 2012)

The computer-generated storyline is depicted in Figure 1. The figure demonstrates how the clients' personal "data" is "tick-boxed" into binary codes (1s and 0s) in the questionnaire and then ideally, as a second step, is fed into the ASI-net (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2014). Using the program developed by the Swedish computer system designers, the binary codes are transformed into a human-like narrative.

3.2. Dennis: A Digital Client

A fictitious example of a computer-generated storyline illustrates the story type that is produced by the computer. The prototypical example is Dennis, a 30-year-old-male, whose story was created in order to make the social workers more willing to feed the results into the ASI-net. Below, a part of the story is presented (the full story was two pages long). His personal "data" (that is, what he chooses to tell the social worker) is transformed into codes in a "tick-box" questionnaire. The social worker then feeds the figures into a specific database and the computer "spits out" the story. The "life area" in the following example from the ASI-questionnaire is called "Family and Socializing" (authors' translation). The computer narrates:

Dennis's marital status for 5 years is cohabiting. He is both satisfied and dissatisfied with this situation. He has lived with his partner and children for 5 years and is both pleased and displeased with this. They have children of their own. They are expecting a child. Dennis does not live with someone who abuses alcohol or drugs. He spends most of his spare time with family and loved ones who do not have current alcohol- or drug problems. He is happy to spend leisure time in this way.

The story is told in the third person perspective and the classic narrative is used as a format. However, the computerised narrative lacks the characteristics of human narration, which makes it appear rather awkward. The resulting narrative appears mechanical and seems impossible to copy-and-paste into the social work investigation without narrative editing (cf. Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

This short story is interesting in several ways. First, the language used by Data-Dennis is highly reminiscent of a bureaucratic discourse. The language is constructed to fit into a social work investigation, where impartiality and objectivity are central features (cf. Ponnert, 2015). However, it is rather difficult to understand what Dennis is trying to explain. A somewhat ambivalent discourse unfolds: "He is both satisfied and dissatisfied with this situation" and he "is both pleased and displeased with" his family life, gives a fragmented and confusing understanding of Dennis' family situation, and the story, in this unedited form, raises more questions than are being answered. As it stands, it is not possible to use in an ongoing investigation without changing the discourse. An anecdotal example gives an indication as to how social workers handle these narrative problems. While I was giving a lecture in the spring of 2015, an experienced social worker and ASI-user came forward and explained how he managed similar ambiguities: "You just change the text here and there, so it sounds more realistic", he explained. The example shows that creative strategies are needed to humanise the digital voice. A de-computerisation is needed
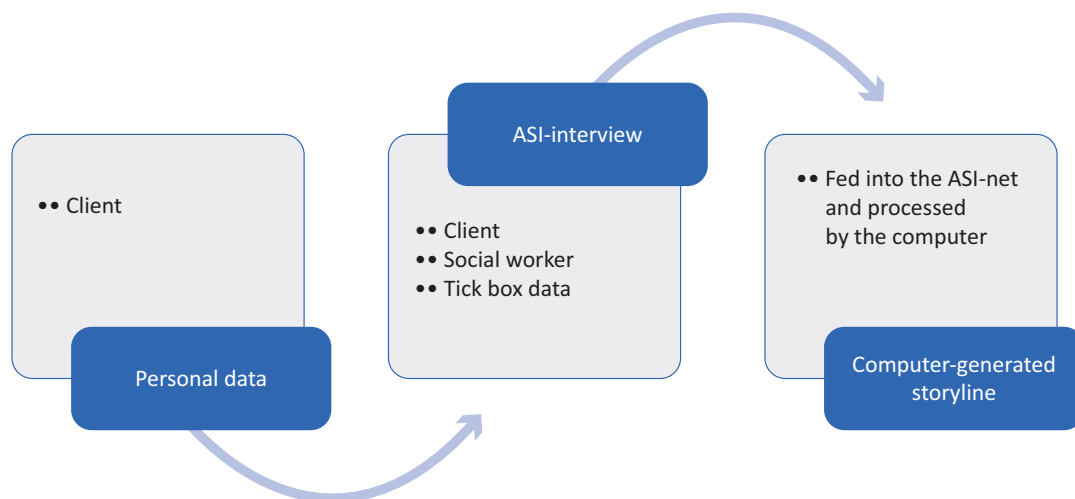

Figure 1. Transformation of the client story into a computer-generated storyline.

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to make the story pass as a human narrative (Jacobsson & Martinell Barfoed, in press). As this software program is a central part of the ASI data support (as per a telephone interview on December 2018), it is likely that similar strategies are used by social workers using the program. Human editing is needed to soften the bluntness of the computerised storyline.

The example has other interesting dimensions. Aas (2004) found that a database-logic has a strong hold on society today, and that digitalisation and standardisation are parts of this endeavour. Concepts like facts and information change social work discourse. The personal story, with its well-known signs of human narration, for example, hesitations, contradictions, and complexities are reduced to "facts" in a questionnaire. Instead of the clients' stories being produced during social interaction, with the clients' experience and voice as a point of departure, standardised discourse appears reduced and detached (Parton, 2008). The description of the client becomes fact-like, with ambiguities and restrained alternative versions. In this sense, facts are worked up and personal points of view and accounts, which are important for decision-making, run the risk of being left unheard (Martinell Barfoed, 2018). In addition, the results of these kinds of assessment instruments—the figures, scales, and numbers being produced—make the client's life appear fragmented and decontextualised from the complex factors affecting our lives (cf. Peckover et al., 2010). For example, the pre-fabricated questions with set life areas do not take structural circumstances into consideration (Herz, 2012).

People in contact with social services are transformed into data that are assembled in different ways, based on current trends in human service organisations. The individual, like Data-Dennis, is transformed into a virtual data double (Haggerty & Ericson, 2000), a human-machine product with a virtual identity. Lash (2002) described how society is increasingly leaving the linear story to focus on facts and information and this may change how meaning is shaped. Aas (2004) claimed that the database as a cultural form differs from the narrative. The database logic affects how identities are established and impacts how knowledge is defined. For example, facts and information in the database are not necessarily linked but can be put together and picked apart for the purpose at hand (also called "data fusion", see Manovich, 2013, pp. 330–340). While the database logic might be the preferred form for policymakers collecting statistics, trying to get a "big picture", narratives from face-to-face interaction appear to be more helpful in individual decision-making (Martinell Barfoed, 2018).

3.3. Patrick: An Interactional Example

To demonstrate how the interaction unfolds during a passage in the ASI interview that matches Dennis' storyline, an example is given: Patrick is 25 years old and awaiting trial for growing cannabis. We meet at the probation of-fice, where a male social worker in his 60s is asking the questions, under the heading "Family and Socializing" in the ASI-questionnaire. The social worker has just asked a rather complicated question about Patrick's marital status, and after a rather long negotiation about how to interpret the question, Patrick summarises:

Patrick: Put 4 [years] and 4 [months].

Social worker: [the pen rasping] Are you satisfied with this situation? You can answer: No, yes, or both.

Patrick: [hesitates] I am satisfied.

Social worker: You are satisfied [looks down and writes in the form].

Patrick: Well, it's not that I wasn't satisfied when I was living together [in an earlier relationship].

Social worker: [looks up] No, but you are not discontent with your present situation? [Patrick shakes his head] No. OK. Well...the questions are a bit tricky at times. Sometimes I don't know how to interpret a question, like in this case. How are you supposed to interpret a certain question? In some cases, you have to reason for what seems to be the most sensible answer.

Patrick: Yes.

Social worker: This is why I sometimes hesitate...like in this case, you see. Because it [the question] is not crystal clear.

The excerpt above demonstrates that the interaction between social worker and client is not straightforward. For example, the social worker's affirmation "You are satisfied", is by Patrick interpreted more like a question: "Are you (really) satisfied?" and Patrick seems obliged to account for his experiences in an earlier relationship. These kinds of affirmations are common in standardised interaction: by repeating the answer, the interviewer reassures that the answer is understood correctly (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000). In the last part of the example, the social worker departs from the standardised script and goes "off-track". The complaints from the social worker can be interpreted in different ways: as a way of "softening" and humanising the rather blunt interaction, with its unbalanced power relations, in front of the audience (Patrick and researcher), as well as a way of demonstrating that the interviewer is not a "dope". When making the meta-comments, stepping out of the scripted "on-track" questions (that is, not following the protocol as intended) the social worker uses his discretion (Lipsky, 1980). "Off-track" comments proved to be pervasive in the ASI interviews. In this sense, standardised interaction has conversational qualities (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000).

Houtkoop-Steenstra (2000) finds that the questionnaire, to a high degree, is an interactional achievement and that it is situationally accomplished. The interaction between Patrick and the social worker also shows that the standardised interview, to a large extent, unfolds in collaboration. Apart from the power imbalances built into the standardised interview, the social worker and the client both struggle to solve difficulties along the way, be it questions that are difficult to understand or interactional troubles (see Martinell Barfoed, 2018).

By this example of face-to-face interaction, we get a picture of how the interaction preceding Dennis' computerised storyline can unfold. We learn that each part of the ASI-tool has its characteristics, which affect the people-production process, i.e., the final description of an individual client and his or her life situation and possible needs. One missing part in this article is how the social worker enters the binary data into the ASI database. The interaction between the social worker and the computer can shed light on important choices made, affecting the outcome, the digital story. An ethnographic study, shadowing every part of the ASI-chain with "real cases" would give a more thorough picture of the ASI as a digital tool. Still, as a prototype, Data-Dennis is an interesting example of new ways to construct a social work client in the digital era.

4. Conclusion

Digital infrastructures, where data can be collected and compared, are embraced by policymakers and state authorities to develop and update the welfare state. However, as Timmermans and Epstein (2010) argue, the consequences of standardisation are not yet fully known, and intended goals often bring along unintended results. Ivarsson Westerberg (2004) provides three explanations as to why these administrative changes have a strong hold on the public sector: (1) the possibility to document (the technical development), (2) government requirements and guidelines to document have bearing on the changes ("the audit society", says Power, 1997), and (3) the will to use these documentation systems, are important factors in their successful implementation. Although human service professions complain about digital documentation taking time from patients and service users, there are benefits that come with the changes. Being on the digital front line, and appearing to get a higher professional status, can make it difficult to be critical to digital innovations and how they fit into social work (cf. Jacobsson & Martinell Barfoed, 2016).

Data-Dennis, instead of giving a "human impression", rather appears as a "digital dope" (paraphrasing Harold Garfinkel's concept). In the example, personal storytelling is transformed into a digital narrative, where the border between technique and man is blurred and challenged. The right to formulate a personal story in the individual's own words is lost, which make it sound peculiar and de-humanised. When digital classification and standardised assessments are used in professional practices like social work, new questions need to be addressed and answered: How is decision-making affected by the standardised stories entering social work? How is the client represented? Where do the challenges and possibilities lie? More empirical studies are needed to analyse digital era tools.

As discussed in this article, not only the form, but also language is affected by the database logic: the vocabulary itself is influenced by standardisation. In the computer-generated story, an ambiguous discourse was detected. This discourse needed narrative editing to pass as a "meaningful human story". Every language format has linguistic restrictions and narrative discourse is not an exception. For example, personal stories, such as success stories and stories with a happy ending, are often culturally preferred; while others, like narratives of social failure, are less attractive (Hydén, 1995). The examples presented and analysed here demonstrate how a standardised client is produced. The result is a client whose human voice is effaced and represented by the voice of the computer. Without jumping to hasty conclusions, this is a rather remarkable change in a profession where empathy and ethical considerations are paramount (Trevithick, 2012).

Finally, the personal story does not give direct access to an "inner truth" and should by no means be romanticised. However, history shows that "telling your own story" can be as important for the individual as for groups of individuals. Plummer (1995) even regards the telling of personal stories as a human right. In social work, the personal story, in all its messiness and constructiveness, is a given starting point for professional social work. Standardisers of social work need to take this into consideration so that information technology, instead of being "a self-sealing belief system powered by magical thinking" (White et al., 2010, p. 416) is carefully constructed in collaboration with social workers and their clients.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Elizabeth Martinell Barfoed is a Lecturer at the School of Social Work, Lund University, Sweden. With a degree in Social Work, earned in the 1970s, and another in Journalism, earned in the 1980s, social work has been the center of her research, first in practice, then in academic settings. In November 2008, she defended her PhD dissertation *Adoption Stories*, a constructionist and narrative study, at Lund University. Her later work explores standardisation and digitalisation and the consequences for social work, resulting in several Swedish and international publications.

Article

Documenting Practices in Human Service Organisations through Information Systems: When the Quest for Visibility Ends in Darkness

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Abstract
Over the last decades, transparency about what is happening on the ground has become a hot topic in the field of social work. Despite the importance of transparent social work, the realisation in practice is far from obvious. In order to create this transparency for a diversity of stakeholders, legislative bodies and human services increasingly rely on so-called electronic information systems. However, it remains unclear how frontline managers make use of these systems to create this transparent practice and which obstacles they might experience in doing so. Based on empirical data collected in Flanders (Belgium), we argue that frontline managers as well as practitioners, when confronted with the obligation to use electronic information systems to document their actions and create transparency, find a beneficial element in using such a tool for the purpose of transparency. However, we also argue that the idea of transparency through documenting human service practices by the use of electronic information systems seems to be nuanced, as tension or ambiguity occurs in daily practice. Our data show that many aspects of the service user's life story become invisible because the documenting system is unable to grasp its complexity, resulting in a lack of transparency.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Human services have always been engaged with the gathering and recording of information about their daily practices and the service users they work with. This is not such a surprise as this information serves as a resource for all kinds of administrative procedures, teaching and supervision, as well as a means of improving the skills of practitioners and their teams. Timms already knew this in 1972 when he wrote that "the history of recording in social work is as long as the history of modern social work" itself (Timms, 1972, p. 1). However, what Timms could not know at the time was that these informational activities would gain, under the influence of an "electronic turn", much more significance over time and even lead to a so-called informational context in which human services are expected to record and process information about their activities with service users more than ever before (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002; Garrett, 2005; Hall, Parton, Peckover, & White, 2010; Parton, 2006). This electronic turn has become even more prominent with the ever-expanding possibilities of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Despite a historical scepticism of information technology systems within the field of social work, such systems have spread widely amongst human services worldwide (Gillingham, 2011a; Hudson, 2002; Munro, 2005; Parton, 2008; Wastell & White, 2014). This has resulted

in the implementation of various heterogeneous electronic information systems, including decision-making and risk-assessment tools, data-recording systems, digital casework environments and many other variations amongst human services across the world (Carrilio, 2005; Garrett, 2005; Gillingham, 2011a, 2015; Hill & Shaw, 2011; Keymolen & Broeders, 2013; Munro, 2005). Governments worldwide seem to be keen to invest in electronic information systems as they are convinced that these systems are capable of solving a wide range of organisational and social problems (Munro, 2005; Wastell & White, 2014). One of the organisational and social problems governments attempt to address by investing in electronic information systems is the problem of transparency (Gillingham & Graham, 2016).

Although it remains hard to tackle exactly what is meant by transparency, contemporary research provides us with some possible answers by fleshing out the rationales behind the increasing demand for transparency. For instance, the need for transparency for human services has grown significantly over the last few decades due to societal developments such as managerialism and risk reduction (e.g., Gillingham & Graham, 2016; Munro, 2004, 2011). At the same time, De Vos (2015) illustrated how, despite the many consultative and participatory bodies, there still seems to be a fundamental absence of transparency about the arguments that lead to interventions in the lives of children and their families. As a result, over the last decades, a diversity of stakeholders—including legislative bodies, human services, and researchers—have been searching for vigorous solutions to solve this problem of transparency.

One of the preferred solutions seems to lie in implementing electronic information systems in human services (Gillingham, 2011b; Parton, 2008). According to Munro (2005, p. 374), this is not surprising as "to the man with a new hammer, every problem tends to be seen as a loose nail. To a government intent on developing e-government, every problem at present tends to be seen as a dearth of ICT". By implementing electronic information systems, governments try to create a transparent human service practice with regard to the service user, the practitioner and broader society (Gillingham & Graham, 2016; Hill & Shaw, 2011; Munro, 2004; Pollack, 2009). In the end, it is assumed that electronic information systems are capable of creating a transparent human service practice where actions on the ground are made visible and thus discussable (Van Yperen, 1996, 2013). According to Gillingham and Graham (2016, p. 194), the implementation of electronic information systems in human services has even made the daily work of practitioners "visible in ways that social workers in the 1970s and much of the 1980s would find unimaginable".

Interestingly, though, despite this rather positive rhetoric about the possibilities of electronic information systems to create transparency, it remains unclear how the creation of transparency through electronic information systems is realised (or not realised) in daily practice. Hence, the following questions arise: does the use of electronic information systems to create transparency conflict with the daily work of practitioners? Can electronic information systems serve to create a transparent human service practice? Are electronic information systems able to assist practitioners in creating transparency or do they inhibit this development? Can a transparent practice be created when electronic information systems are in play? It is our contention to capture these questions by interviewing frontline managers and practitioners who are obliged to use electronic information systems when working with service users. In interviewing them, we focus on their perspectives on creating transparency through electronic information systems and the way they try to bring these perspectives into their daily practice, as well as the possible obstacles they experience in doing so.

In what follows, we will first outline how the current quest for transparency is the result of two societal developments (i.e., managerialism and risk-reduction) and the empirical-based observation that there still is a lack of transparency about the knowledge base that decisions are made on (De Vos, 2015; Gillingham & Graham, 2016; Hill & Shaw, 2011; Munro, 2004; Pollack, 2009). We then continue by outlining the belief in electronic information systems to meet the current demand for transparency before moving on to the methodological part of the paper. Afterwards, we present our findings and discuss their implications for human services.

2. The Quest for Transparency

2.1. Managerialism

The picture that emerges from research reflects that the quest for transparency is strongly embedded in the prism of managerialism. Managerialism can be described as the political answer to the economic crisis of the 1980s (Baines, 2010; Tsui & Cheung, 2004), and can be summarised as a combination of:

> Management's generic tools and knowledge with ideology to establish itself systemically in organizations, public institutions, and society....Managerialism justifies the application of its one-dimensional managerial techniques to all areas of work, society, and capitalism on the grounds of superior ideology, expert training, and the exclusiveness of managerial knowledge necessary to run public institutions and society as corporations. (Klikauer, 2013, p. 1105)

One central element of managerialism is exactly to create transparency in order to improve performance measurements and heighten efficiency to increase productivity and impose a strict financial discipline with the aim of cutting costs in public expenditure (Aronson & Smith, 2010; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Carrilio, 2005). Hence, legislative bodies attempt to make social work

more auditable (Falconer, Rhodes, Mena, & Reid, 2009; Gillingham & Graham, 2016; Munro, 2004). In order to so, practitioners and human services are required to show that they are acting properly and according to regulations. In doing so, all their activities need to be transparent and visible to a diversity of stakeholders, including service users, professionals, legislative bodies and wider society (Aronson & Smith, 2009; Gillingham & Graham, 2016; Munro, 2004, 2011).

2.2. Risk-Society

Interrelated with this managerial context, researchers point out the current societal preoccupation with risk and risk reduction in particular (e.g., Broadhurst, Hall, Wastell, White, & Pithouse, 2010; Munro, 2004; Parton, 1998). The determination to keep children from any harm, abuse and risk is rooted in the public response to tragedies such as Victoria Climbié and Baby P. in the UK (White, Hall, & Peckover, 2009) and Savanna and 'Maasmeisje' in the Netherlands. As a result of these cases, but especially the public inquiries following these cases, legislative bodies and the media, as well as society as a whole, have been occupied with identifying, assessing and, most of all, reducing the amount of risk children encounter (Munro, 2004). Such arguments are used to explain why legislative bodies were and still are keen to invest in practices of risk reduction, as they seem to be convinced that these practices will make potentially dangerous situations visible and so prevent children from suffering abuse and mistreatment and encountering violence, as practitioners will be able to intervene more quickly than before (Broadhurst et al., 2010; Munro, 2004; Parton, 1998).

2.3. Invisible Knowledge Base

Besides both these societal developments, a third issue comes to the fore when having a look at the current quest for transparency. In his recent research, De Vos (2015) looked deeper into so-called bottleneck cases. The concept of a 'bottleneck case' refers to those cases in Flemish Child Welfare and Protection (CWP) in which children with a mental disability cannot be admitted into services for children with a disability when they are also diagnosed with problems that relate to child protection such as behavioural problems or the upbringing of those children. This specific 'bottleneck case' procedure attempts to set up an individual treatment plan with the right combination of expertise by combining regular and existing forms of care supply with additional, individualised forms of care supply, because the regular care system lacks expertise to deal with these often complex and multifaceted problems.

These 'bottleneck cases' are exemplary for those cases in which many actors take many decisions in "the best interests of the child". De Vos (2015), together with the children involved, tried to reconstruct the trajectory or path these children had already walked for the past few years. He found that there was a fundamental absence of communication, let alone reciprocity, leading to a lack of transparency about the arguments that had led to the interventions these children and their families were subjected to over the past few years. He, with the support of other scholars, considers this as remarkable and troubling, as transparency about and involvement in the decisions that are made and deeply affect the lives of children and their families are seen as sine qua non for setting up a high-quality care process (Gillingham & Graham, 2016; Hill & Shaw, 2011; Munro, 2004; Pollack, 2009).

In the end, it is by making the complexity of a service user's world visible, negotiable and open for discussion that human services are able to tune in to a concrete "life story or a biography of [that particular client] with a certain sense of internal connection between the past, present and the future" (Aas, 2004, p. 386). This reciprocal dialogue can therefore be seen as "the medium through which the practitioner can engage with and intervene in the complexity of an individual's internal and external worlds" (Wilson, Ruch, Lymbery, & Cooper, 2008, p. 7). As such, the service user's problems and concerns are being mutually discussed and even co-constructed (Oostrik, 2010; Parton, 2009; Parton & O'Byrne, 2000).

Bearing all this in mind, it comes as no surprise that many attempts have been made to create transparency and make visible what happens on the ground and why it happens when it comes to intervening in the private lives of children and their families. In these attempts, legislative bodies have shown a particular interest in the possibilities of a wide diversity of electronic information systems to do the job.

3. Electronic Information Systems as a Means for Transparency

In doing so, reference is made to how these systems may help "to obtain rich material and understanding of participants' [clients'] experience" (Tregeagle & Darcy, 2008, p. 1485). According to Sapey, electronic forms of communication 'can provide a medium for communication with children that they may find less inhibiting than face-to-face discussion with adults' (Sapey, 1997, p. 812). These forms are assumed to have the capacity and potential to assist clients tell their story, which, in turn, can lead to a better understanding and visibility of a service user's situation (Carrilio, 2005; Sapey, 1997; Tregeagle & Darcy, 2008).

At heart is the argument that electronic information systems are capable, or at least believed to be capable, of making everything visible at every level (Gillingham & Graham, 2016). According to several scholars (Eito Mateo, Gómez Poyato, & Marcuello Servós, 2018), information technology-based systems, such as electronic information systems, are perfectly suited to operate as

a tool for communication and intercommunication between service users and their immediate surroundings such as professionals and human service teams as these systems are able to capture the 'whole image', not least because the structure of electronic information systems tends to encourage professionals to pay explicit attention to all life domains that are considered important for the service user and as such encourages them to further grasp and uncover the often-complex lifeworld of human service users (Carrilio, 2005; Devlieghere, Bradt, & Roose, 2017a). At the same time, legislative bodies also believe that electronic information systems are able to make all activities visible, which might lead to more accountability and a reduction in potential risks for children (Aronson & Smith, 2009; Gillingham & Graham, 2016; Munro, 2004, 2011).

This view has led to the implementation of a great variety of heterogeneous electronic information systems amongst human services, such as decision-making and risk-assessment tools, data-recording systems, digital casework environments and many other variations (Falconer et al., 2009; Garrett, 2005; Gillingham, 2011b; White et al., 2009). Examples abound of the worldwide proliferation of electronic information systems in human service environments, such as the Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP) in Australia (Gillingham, 2011a), the *Barns Behov i Centrum* (BBIC) or Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families in Sweden, the National Reference Index for High-Risk Youngsters, also referred to as the Child Index, in the Netherlands (Keymolen & Broeders, 2013; Lecluijze, Penders, Feron, & Horstman, 2015), and the Information System for the Intersectoral Gateway (INSISTO) in Flanders (Devlieghere et al., 2017a). These examples illustrate how the use of electronic information systems have become ubiquitous in human services across the world in an attempt to increase transparency about what is happening in daily practice and why it is happening, thereby attempting to increase human services' accountability and efficiency.

This is no different in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) where a new electronic information system, referred to as INSISTO was installed in 2014. Amongst other goals, the INSISTO system was installed to create more transparency, heighten accountability and increase efficiency. This was clearly illustrated by (Devlieghere, Bradt, & Roose, 2017b), who analysed policy documents and interviewed Flemish legislative bodies to uncover the rationales for implementing electronic information systems in human service daily practice. In their research, they found that legislative bodies indicate that electronic information systems will increase efficiency by streamlining and replacing the paperwork of practitioners, as well as by transforming and exchanging information quickly and easily through a digital format. At the same time, the legislative bodies that were interviewed also explained how they sought to heighten accountability as they felt that in these contem-

porary times of economic scarcity, they have no other choice than to generate data, which can heighten human services' accountability (Devlieghere, Bradt, & Roose, 2017c). This was aptly summarised by one policy maker:

> I guess my core message is very similar to what I said earlier. It is so important that we heighten our societal accountability, especially in times of scarcity, but not only in times of scarcity. 360 million euro is a lot of money and we must say what we do with it. (Devlieghere et al., 2017c, p. 1510)

However, as already argued, despite the rather positive societal and legislative rhetoric about the possibilities of electronic information systems to create transparency, there is little to no empirical insight into how these systems may actually create transparency 'on the ground'. This, though, is of critical importance because we know that professionals, such as social practitioners and frontline managers, possess a "continuing (and inevitable) level of discretion…in public services" (Evans, 2015, p. 1) and use this discretion to shape, evade, bend and even refuse to comply with procedural and governmental guidelines if they are convinced that these guidelines go against their own commitment to service users (Aronson & Smith, 2009; Evans, 2011, 2015).

In order to empirically grasp what is 'happening on the ground', we interviewed 29 frontline managers that have direct contact with human service users, asking them how they make use of electronic information systems to involve service users in their care process and how they set up a participatory care process. We also interviewed 16 social practitioners who work with INSISTO on a daily base. We focused on their perspectives on the use of electronic information systems to increase transparency and create participation, the way they try to bring these perspectives into their day-to-day practice, and the obstacles they experience in doing so.

4. Methodological Framework

4.1. Study Context

The research was carried out from 2014 to 2017 in the region of Flanders. This region is the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. During the time the research was carried out, the Flemish CWP landscape was undergoing a fundamental reform that had an enormous impact on the daily work of human services, their practitioners and users. The reform was the result of a long societal and political struggle concerning the quality of CWP in Flanders. In order to improve its quality, the Flemish Parliament enacted two Acts of Parliament in 2004 to address the long waiting lists, the inefficient use of resources and the severe fragmentation of human services (Vanhee, 2014). Despite the efforts by the Flemish Government, the number of referrals went through the roof. Children were sent from pillar to post, arriving in no man's land with-

out receiving the appropriate care. At the same time, the number of children growing up in vulnerable situations and asking for help increased, resulting in even more pressure on the CWP services (Vanhee, 2014).

This urged the Flemish Government to approve a new Act of Parliament on Integrated CWP in 2014. This new Act significantly reformed the organisational structure of the Flemish CWP landscape. One of the pivotal elements within this reform was the implementation of a new electronic information system, referred to as INSISTO. The INSISTO system assists the Flemish Government and its central services in making a distinction between directly and non-directly accessible human services. The former, such as non-residential services or psychiatric care, is only accessible through a so-called entrance ticket, which can only be obtained via the Intersectoral Gateway (Verhoest, Voets, & Molenveld, 2013). When a practitioner is confronted with a severe situation and is convinced that the service user needs non-directly accessible care (e.g., a more specialised and intrusive form of care), this practitioner is obliged to submit an electronic standardised form, referred to as the Assistance Document or A-DOC. This A-DOC can only be submitted through INSISTO and includes identification and a well-considered proposal for appropriate care based on diagnostic information and information about the needs and capacities of the service user and their family. Once the A-DOC has been completed, it is sent to a Needs Assessment Team (NAT), who will assess the content to decide whether or not the requested help is necessary and appropriate. If they decide the request for non-directly accessible care is legitimate, another team, the Youth Care Planning Team, figures out which human services are available to provide the formulated care (Vanhee, 2014).

4.2. Data Collection

Because of their central role in the reformed CWP system and their daily involvement with the INSISTO system, we contacted 15 Pupil Guidance Centres, 11 Centres for General Welfare Work and 22 services for Special Youth Care in East Flanders, as this region was the first region to be reorganised and restructured as a result of the CWP reform, which means they have the most experience in working with INSISTO. In the process of contacting these organisations, the Centres for General Welfare Work made it clear that they were not familiar enough with the electronic information system to participate in the research. At the same time, it also became clear that the Pupil Guidance Centres were overwhelmed by the many tasks that lay ahead as they were also subjected to a second reform that significantly restructured their assignment. As a result, and due to a lack of time, our initial invitation to participate in the research received little to no response. Out of the 22 services for Special Youth Care, five responded that they were not able to participate and nine did not answer our multiple invitations.

In the end, eight responded positively and participated in the research. This encouraged us to contact 17 Pupil Guidance Centres and eight Centres for General Welfare Work in the adjacent region of West Flanders. Here, a similar pattern occurred as all the Centres for General Welfare Work refused to participate on the grounds that they had nothing to contribute since their experience with INSISTO was very limited. The responses of the Pupil Guidance Centres were also weak. In the end, seven of them participated in the research.

In total, 20 different Flemish CWP services—12 Pupil Guidance Centres and eight services for Special Youth Care—agreed to participate and were incorporated as research participants. The frontline managers of these services were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. All interviews took place at the workplace of the participants to reduce the amount of time participants had to spend in contributing to the research. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. All interviews were also audiotaped and transcribed verbatim and approval of the university's Ethics Committee was obtained prior to the research. One interview was lost due to technical problems with the audio-recorder. As a result, 19 semi-structured interviews with 29 managers were used as data.

Furthermore, we conducted interviews in the five regional NATs in Flanders. All members of the NATs were contacted by email. In total, 17 professionals are employed in the five NATs: five psychologists, one criminologist, three educators and eight social workers. Although these professionals cannot be strictly defined as frontline practitioners, as they have no direct contact with clients, it is relevant to mention that they are still regarded as 'social' practitioners, as the Flemish government deliberately decided not to engage mere 'technicians', but to install teams of 'social workers' with extensive experience in frontline work with children and families.

Based on the contacts with the individual members of the NATs and the regional managers, all the contacted professionals seemed ready to participate in the research. As always, participants were first informed that the study proposal had been reviewed and approved in line with the university's research ethics guidelines. They were also informed about the content of the study and assured that the collected data would be fully anonymised, and the names of third parties and institutions excised. Also, attention was drawn to their right to withdraw during the interview process. This right was invoked by one participant, who made it clear that they were not participating voluntarily but had been forced to do so by their supervisor. As a consequence, the informed consent could not be signed and the interview was not included as research data, although the participant insisted on talking to the researcher. This conversation took place but was not recorded or categorised as part of the research material. Thus, in total, 16 qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted at the workplace of the participants and lasted for approxi-

mately one hour with variations from 35 minutes to an hour and a half. In most of the NATs, multiple interviews were conducted in one day to limit the researcher's travel time. With the participants' permission, the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

4.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were thematically analysed with the help of NVivo 10 (Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, & Townsend, 2010; Mortelmans, 2007; Van Hove & Claes, 2011). A main advantage of this approach is that once the initial coding stage has been completed, recurrent themes occur that are based on the participants' narratives (Van Hove & Claes, 2011). This inductive way of working with the data leads to certain codes or categories, rather than a pre-existing theoretical framework (Floersch et al., 2010). During this stage, codes or themes are often renamed or reorganised into broader themes as "the researcher is convinced that the different categories mean the same thing" (Van Hove & Claes, 2011, p. 192). This allowed us to "identify dominant themes which underlie the content of the conversation" (Van Hove & Claes, 2011, p. 103). We considered this approach to be appropriate, as we had no preconceived theoretical framework that steered our analysis. Finally, 15% of the transcripts were independently analysed by two other senior researchers. This co-analysis also allowed the two senior researchers to identify themes that the main researcher had not identified at first sight.

5. Findings

In the following section, we present the overarching themes that emerged throughout the interviews. These themes relate to the perspective of the interviewees on setting up a transparent care process in general, the use of electronic information systems for setting up this process in particular, and the possible obstacles they experience in doing so.

5.1. Participatory Possibilities

During the interviews, frontline managers and social practitioners were asked about their perspectives on setting up a transparent care practice in their team and day-to-day practice. All of them were convinced of the need of such a practice and indicated how, in relation to this topic, the minds of legislative bodies, managers and practitioners have matured over the last decade. Consequently, many of the frontline managers and social practitioners were advocating a transparent approach in human services, thereby indicating "they could only welcome such a practice" (interview M.11).

Interestingly, though, different perspectives arose when discussing how to set up this transparent care practice and what role electronic information systems could play in this setup. Frontline managers differ on whether

the use of electronic information systems can be considered beneficial for the realisation of transparency or not. According to several of the interviewees, the structured and preordained format of an electronic information system stimulates them to include the perspective of the service user and their family more extensively than before, thereby making their wishes more visible. The argument is not so much that practitioners did not include this perspective before, but that the electronic information system "obliges you to sit at the table with the service user and their family and to listen to what they have to say" (interview M.12). One of the social practitioners said:

> A good tool is one in which several views and opinions from all actors involved can be discussed. One in which the parents and the minor can discuss their own point of view as well as the view of the social worker submitting the A-DOC and that of the social worker[s] who previously worked with the service user are encapsulated.

The way in which the interviewees use electronic information systems for creating transparency also differs from interviewee to interviewee, from manager to manager and from practitioner to practitioner. One frontline manager refers to a practice that often occurs in which managers and other colleagues of the team, including practitioners, literally use the words of the service user and their family to describe the areas of concern and to identify what kind of care is most appropriate. One of the interviewees explained:

> Gradually, we are literally writing down what service users tell us. At least, we try to do that. And if they have trouble explaining, we translate it and ask their permission to write it down in another way. (interview M.7)

As both frontline managers and practitioners are obliged to write down what they are doing and why they are doing it, some of them are convinced that the electronic information system will assist legislative bodies and human services in gaining a better insight into contemporary developments and, most of all, in new areas of concern that need to be handled. According to them, this will lead to more transparency about what is going on within and across human services. Several of the interviewees pointed out how this could also be beneficial for service users. In explaining so, they pointed out that an electronic information system might avoid so-called hidden agendas in which professionals have an undisclosed plan as, for instance, the A-DOC is now being completed in cooperation with the service user and other actors who are involved. One of the social practitioners said:

> Matters of concern should be discussed openly and honestly. You can't work with families while there are

things happening behind their back. Now you have to formulate all those things correctly.

Some of the interviewees explicitly referred to the use of the A-DOC as a tool for giving service users profound insight into what happened during their own care trajectory and especially why it happened. Due to the preordained structure of the tool, these interviewees felt that they were able to reconstruct the clients' trajectory and make it visible. This was aptly illustrated by one of the interviewees who experienced this beneficial aspect in their daily practice:

> Once, two girls came back and asked if I would be so kind as to grab their file and tell them their life story. I took their files and I was able to reconstruct their entire trajectory and explain what we discussed, when we discussed it, what decisions were made and especially why they were made.

Throughout the interviews, a picture emerged of how frontline managers and practitioners use electronic information systems to create transparency about the care process in order to clearly demonstrate what is happening during the process, why it is happening and how it is happening. Hence, there seems to be a general consensus amongst the frontline managers and social practitioners we interviewed about the necessity of a transparent care practice and the use of electronic information systems to assist them in creating such a practice. However, when digging deeper into the interviews and the perspectives the interviewees brought to the fore, another more nuanced (or should we say ambiguous) picture or field of tension emerged.

5.2. Making It Work

At the same time as discussing the use of the same electronic information system as above, frontline managers and social practitioners also expressed serious concerns about the use of electronic information systems in general and the use of INSISTO and the A-DOC in their day-to-day practice in particular. Some of them pointed out that the linguistic structure of a database—including electronic information systems—is different from the spoken word, as a database is marked by its lack of narratives (e.g., Aas, 2004; Parton, 2006). One of the frontline managers told us that "the system is way too formalised" (interview M.12) and that the problem is that electronic information systems are not able to capture the whole picture, as they lack nuance and narratives, while every case is different. One manager told us:

> The categories used in the electronic information system were constantly being adapted and fine-tuned because they are looking for unequivocal coding and registration. But the more options there are, the more nuances....You can never capture them all....In the end,

with registration, you always get the same story. (Interview M.4)

This view was reinforced by other interviewees, indicating how they considered the development towards electronic information systems to be problematic and bound to bring a number of consequences. For example, many described how a preordained tool made it almost impossible for them to capture important nuances and to present a complete overview of the service users' life history as "it is too fragmented and split into pieces" (Devlieghere et al., 2017a, p. 744). This makes it difficult for them to "read between the lines" making "it hard to present a complete and nuanced overview of what happened" (Devlieghere et al., 2017a, p. 744), as there seems to be no beginning, middle or end. They are, in that vein, illustrating what Parton (2006) and Hall et al. (2010) refer to as a process of "decontextualization" as a result of standardised tools such as electronic information systems.

Furthermore, many of the interviewees felt limited in their options for developing high-quality human services that are able to be responsive to the needs of the service users and their families. In fact, they were worried that electronic information systems impede these relationships. One local manager even saw "a tendency towards anonymisation" (Interview M.17). This view was echoed by several colleagues as they were worried about the contrast between the logic of the database and a care logic. One interviewee illustrated this from their viewpoint:

> To date, reality has to follow the logic of the database while we used to be able to decide some things with…wisdom. Wisdom in thinking of how we can solve the issue at stake and how we will deal with it. (Interview M.6)

The concern that the implementation of electronic information systems tends to impede the development of high-quality human services was reflected by many frontline managers' and practitioners' resistance to some aspects of procedures and regulations embedded within the systems. One manager, for instance, said: "I think it would be good if the team were allowed to deviate from the standards embedded in the tool" (Interview M. 13). However, these interviewees were expected to execute the guidelines without any exception. Many said that, as a result, they felt they had no other choice than to use their discretionary power to go underground and work around the electronic information system and its rigid structure and procedures. Manifestations of doing this were contacting other services before completing the A-DOC; exaggerating the service user's problem or withholding positive information about the service user's situation to make their situation look sufficiently precarious on paper. According to one interviewee:

Sometimes you know where a client belongs and what services they need….But you need to get the story sold in a certain way….Because of the lack of available care supply, you need to emphasise when a client needs care….You need to bring the client into the spotlight to make sure that they receive the care that seems appropriate at that time. (Interview M. 17)

In that vein, some of the interviewees were worried that electronic information systems are bound to become the "single source of truth" (Peckover, White, & Hall, 2008), as only information that has been submitted through electronic information systems is seen as relevant and transparent. During the interviews, several of the participants referred to one striking example illustrating the above:

We had a team meeting and there was a child that had already been admitted for several years into an organisation for children with a moderate mental disability. They did some new IQ test for the A-DOC and he was diagnosed with a minor mental disability. As a result, strictly speaking and following the rules, this child would no longer be admitted into the organisation for children with a moderate mental disability, although they had taken care of him for the last few years. Now, together with the psychiatrist, we wondered how he behaved in real life, what care he needed and what areas of concern he had. The psychiatrist responded that he belonged in the organisation for children with a moderate mental disability, so we gave him a moderate mental disability on paper. (Devlieghere et al., 2017a, p. 745)

In other words, during the interviews, the frontline managers and the social practitioners explained how they also felt that electronic information systems forced them to develop strategies of resistance, resulting in actions that were invisible and thus not transparent for service users, colleagues, other human services and legislative bodies, even though these systems had been set up for the express purpose of creating a transparent human service practice. As this ambiguous and even paradoxical situation touches upon the heart of our research question and raises serious concerns for human service practice, we will discuss its implications further in what follows.

6. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Our findings stimulate an important discussion—or should we say struggle—when it comes to the use of electronic information systems to create transparency. In the end, our findings indicate that frontline managers as well as social practitioners generally acknowledge the value and importance of transparency in their daily practice. Our interviewees identify beneficial elements in the use of electronic information systems to create transparency, although the devil seems to be in the detail. When fur-

ther fleshing out the perspectives of our interviewees, our findings also constitute evidence of a very complex and ambiguous struggle. While valuing the importance and possibilities of electronic information systems, frontline managers and social practitioners acknowledge that these systems also seem to inhibit the development of transparency in daily practice.

The interviewees indicate how the mandatory use of electronic information systems seems to result in a lack of transparency. According to some of the interviewees, an electronic information system might create noise, instead of removing it, as there is less and less space to write down the client's life story as a complete and comprehensive narrative (Aas, 2004). According to our interviewees, this makes it difficult to capture the necessary nuances that help to create a transparent overview of the service user's trajectory. Hence, many frontline managers and social practitioners felt pressured into subordinating regulations and developing ways of pushing back at them while using electronic information systems by devising strategies of resistance such as communicating by phone, turning a blind eye and even exaggerating clients' areas of concern in order to align with clients' needs. By doing so, our interviewees illustrated how the use of electronic information systems in human services forces them to undertake actions that are not visible or transparent. This is actually not much of a surprise. Electronic information systems are often installed because legislative bodies, human services, and even professionals and researchers, tend to hold a view that children should be protected by any means from all risks and potential harm. As said, this has resulted in a focus on risk management, embracing central ideas such as manageability and predictability (Broadhurst et al., 2010; Falconer et al., 2009; Munro, 2004; van Bijleveld, Dedding, & Bunders-Aelen, 2015). These ideas are brought into practice by a variety of measures, including electronic information systems. The problem, however, is that the transparency diminishes because these systems are unable to make visible what happens on the ground because they are unable to capture the often unpredictable and uncertain world vulnerable service users live in (Devlieghere et al., 2017a).

In other words, our research highlights the complexity embedded in using electronic information systems to make visible what happens on the ground, indicating how such systems can influence the creation of transparency in unhelpful and counterproductive ways. This does not mean that electronic information systems are incapable of making actions visible, but that the idea of Gillingham and Graham that electronic information systems have made the daily work of professionals visible in ways that "social workers in the 1970s and much of the 1980s would find unimaginable" (Gillingham & Graham, 2016, p. 194) needs to be nuanced. It is our understanding that realising a transparent care practice is not necessarily or solely about implementing preordained tools, such as electronic information systems, that assist pro-

fessionals in doing their job, as these tools are unable the grasp the complexity of the service users' lifeworld and force professionals to go underground. On the contrary, realising a transparent practice in a context where electronic information systems play an important role might be realised by following a practice-led approach. In such an approach, the first question is what human services need to do to improve their practice. This approach takes into account the consequences of electronic information systems for social work and does not force these systems into practice in ways that are inappropriate and change the task of social work itself, regardless of whether or not they improve practice. The main advantage of such a practice-led approach is that it opens up a dialogue between those who use electronic information systems on a daily base and those who decide whether or not they will implement these systems. It is our understanding that involving all these actors might be a good start to realising a transparent practice that meets the current societal demands of managerialism and risk reduction, as well as the fact that there is still a fundamental lack of transparency about the knowledge that decisions are based on.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Blend Gaps through Papers and Meetings? Collaboration between the Social Services and Jobcentres

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Abstract

The policy word "collaboration" is a political buzzword omnipresent within human service organisations in Sweden and other countries. Collaboration stands for services working together toward a common goal. It is understood as the solution for a multitude of problems, putting the client at the centre and involving the services needed for making them financially self-sufficient. Public service collaboration assumes gaps between entities, whether they are organisations or professionals holding a particular kind of knowledge or available resources. Gaps are seen as omissions and pitfalls in activities which should be removed. My thesis is that putting the gap at the centre reveals not only the disjuncture of the gaps but also the productiveness of the gap in collaborative projects between organisations. The article demonstrates how documents and meetings work both as makers and blenders of gaps between social services and jobcentres. If gaps are productive spaces, what does it denote for collaboration between organisations? The article is placed ethnographically in documents and meetings set to enable collaboration between social workers and job coaches. I will focus on the gap, the space between documents and organisations, as productive spaces in collaborative projects.

Issue

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1. Introduction

> We need to speak the same language so that clients understand that it is the same investigation. (Lena, social worker)

It was Lena, one of the social workers in the assessment-instrument network at the municipality, that pointed out that they had to start talking about numbering the documents used to show the sequence, the flow, that they were meant to represent. She was referring to the documental instrument used to investigate the right to social assistance benefits, the investigation of the capacity to work, and the plan for change. The instrument was divided into four documents: number 1, the "telephone-interview assessment" made by the social services; num-

ber 2, the "job plan" made by the jobcentre in the municipality; number 3, the "assessment during the client's first visit" at the social services; and number 4, the "plan for change", preferably made by the social services and the jobcentre together, but most often performed by the social services with the client. The documents were seldom referred to in daily practice as 1, 2, 3, and 4, but instead by their other name: "job plan" or "plan for change". An in-house study had also shown that the clients did not understand that all four documents were part of the same investigation. The four documents mirrored four different parts in the work process producing four different "documentary persons" (Hull, 2012) while simultaneously aiming to create one.

It was not just the clients that did not think of it as one investigation. The organisation of the municipality

and the organisation of work made the documents appear to be separate for both the social workers and the job coaches, even though they were both set to make clients financially self-sufficient, preferably by getting a job. The social services office and the social workers belonged to the social services administration in the municipality and the jobcentre, and the job coaches were part of the labour market administration in the municipality and even though they were part of the same municipality they were two different organisations located in different places, and as such they were not organised as a one-stop shop as was the case in some other municipalities in Sweden (Minas, 2014). In order for the documents and the work performed through them to appear as one work process, there was a need for collaboration between the social services and the jobcentres. The social services, particularly the social assistance benefits' offices, celebrated collaboration by necessity. Their clients often had several social problems that were not solvable by one actor. Clients may suffer from one or more diagnosis such as posttraumatic stress disorder, mental impairments (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, etc.), physical impairment, depression, or addiction problems that make their ability to financially support themselves challenging. In an effort to make the clients self-reliant, there was a need for collaboration between different professions in other organisations such as the job coaches in the jobcentres. To enable the collaboration between the social assistance benefits offices and the jobcentres, the assessment-instrument network comprising of social workers and job coaches was established, the assessment-instrument documents were designed, and the sequence was determined by the document numbering.

Collaboration between organisations assumes gaps between entities. Gaps are often seen as omissions and pitfalls in organisational activities which should be removed (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). They should be blended to overlap knowledge and resources across organisational and professional boundaries (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). In anthropology, gaps between entities, positions, and ideas have been perceived as a productive, even magical, space. Gap-thinking has long pervaded anthropology, by, for example, Turner (1966/1995), who focused on the liminal phase in ritual, a betwixt and between position of either or. This position of in-betweenness opens up a space between the actual and the potential. Povinelli (2011) refers to moments in the life of alternative social projects when a social project is neither something or nothing, working as this indeterminate oscillation, creating moments for alternative directions. In this way, gaps work both as productive spaces and show disjuncture between entities.

My thesis is that putting the gap at the centre reveals not only the disjuncture of the gaps but also the productiveness of the gap in collaborative projects between organisations. The article demonstrates how documents and meetings work both as makers and blenders

of gaps between the social services and jobcentres and how this reveals the gap as a productive space. The article is placed ethnographically in the four documents themselves and in the assessment-instrument network meetings of social workers and job coaches.

The policy word "collaboration" is a political buzzword which is omnipresent within human service organisations in Sweden and other countries (Germundsson, Hillborg, & Danermark, 2011; Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Collaboration stands for services working together towards a common goal (Germundsson et al., 2011). It is understood as the solution for a multitude of problems putting the client at the centre and involving the services needed for making, in this case, clients financially self-sufficient. It is known that collaboration between professionals from different organisations can be tiresome, difficult, and complicated (Widmark, Sandahl, Piuva, & Bergman, 2016). There is even a term, "partnership fatigue" (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 40), that alludes to this phenomenon.

The literature on collaboration mainly focuses on how to make collaboration possible by closing and bridging gaps. How successful this is is determined by different factors. In their review article, Martin-Rodriguez, Beaulieu, Amour and Ferrada-Videla (2005) point towards systemic determinates—outside the organisation—such as social, cultural, professional systems; organisational determinates, such as structure and philosophy, team resources and administrative support; and finally interactional determinates, such as interpersonal relationships, willingness to collaborate, and the existence of mutual trust, respect, and communication. Territorial behaviour among professionals and organisations is also seen as a hindrance (Axelsson & Axelsson, 2009). Mutual trust, respect, altruism (Axelsson & Axelsson, 2009), communication (Widmark et al., 2016), supporting organisational rules and structure, and a common goal and shared vision (Germundsson et al., 2011) are tools for blending the gaps between organisations and professionals. In this article, I instead focus on the gap, the space between documents and organisations, as productive spaces in collaborative projects. If gaps are productive spaces what does it denote for collaboration between organisations?

In the following section I present my analytical framework through the notions of the documentary person and the meetings as both makers and blenders of gaps between organisations. Then, in Section 3, I present the background and the setting of the assessment-instruments documents, and network meetings. In Section 4 I report on my methods. In the empirical part, Section 5, I first address the "documentary persons" (Hull, 2012) produced through the documents and the gaps they create. In Section 6 I present the assessment-instrument network as a meeting set to make gaps between documents and organisations blend, while at the same time being the gap between organisations. In conclusion, I elaborate on how gaps between documents and organisations are productive spaces.

2. Gaps, Documents, and Meetings

In order to analyse gaps as productive spaces between organisations, I draw on bodies of literature concerned with documents and meetings, as I understand them as makers and blenders of gaps between organisations.

Documents are part of bureaucratic life where the file makes up the bureau/the office (Weber, Gerth, & Mills, 1946). In Weber's ideal bureaucracy, documentation is a way of making the workings of bureaucracy transparent. The ability of documents to produce and create has been well documented, and not just following the Weberian idea that documents produce and create order and coordination, working as a means for management coordination and control, by building fixed and shared meanings in organizations (Harper, 1998). Documents also produce affective energies (Navaro-Yashin, 2007) and entities such as property, technology, or infrastructure, and particular subjects (Hull, 2012).

Documents as producers of particular subjects build on Foucauldian ideas of how the papering of classifications and categorisations in documents make up people through the registering of births, deaths, diseases, literacy, crimes, occupations, and the like (Foucault, 1988; Hacking, 1986). It is in bureaucratic processes that the separation between the "documentary person" and other aspects of personhood is produced (Hull, 2012). The notion of the documentary person draws on the fact that bureaucratic documents and documentation produce a particular kind of personhood that is based only on the information created through documentation. It is a kind of personhood that is partly withdrawn from other aspects of personhood living a life of its own in the files of the office. As such, the documents and the documentary person gain material qualities. Documents have a thingified, material quality (Riles, 2006) and social lives (Brenneis, 2006). They mobilise people, practices, and perspectives such as the "immutable mobile" map, or graph, in Latour's reading (Latour, 1986). As artefacts, they are not neutral, but politically saturated (Navaro-Yashin, 2007). They offer certain "affordances" (Gibson, 1977) that point the direction to how they should and could be used, what human action can be taken.

Understanding bureaucratic and political documents as objects connotes that they have aesthetic qualities, including particular paragraphs, words, heading, typesets, and boxes to fill in (Riles, 2006). These words, headings, typesetting, and the size of the boxes to fill in are part of creating the documentary person. As Riles (2006, p. 20) has noted, the space in such forms contain "within themselves all the terms for analysis one would need to understand or complete them". The writer may not understand exactly what is needed, but the form—what Riles calls a "self-contextualised entity"—provides answers. The size of the space in the form provides information about the expected amount of text needed to explain what the writer should explain. Through the formation of the document and then production of the documentary person

for the file, the edges towards other documents and documentary persons are created. The gap appears in the break between these edges.

Meetings, like documents, enact on-going political and bureaucratic life and they often work as nodes in the on-going affairs in and between organisations. They interrupt the time/space continuum of the work processes in—and between organisations and create a space, a moment, for work processes of the organisation to move in another direction. Meetings are "architecture", "practices of circulation", and "makers" (Sandler & Thedvall, 2017). Meetings as spatial, architectural constructs constrain and enable, and they structure and configure policy practices, documents, words, decision-making processes, and subjects and subjectivities. Meetings are not simply the containers through which these things move, but they are themselves practices of circulation, whereby policy takes form and is worked out. Meetings also operate as makers of governance and management. Meetings are both the architecture and the architect. Irrespective of intention, meetings make certain processes possible and close the door to other directions of development. To understand meetings as nodes that interrupt the time/space continuum in on-going work processes in—and between organisations makes it possible to understand them as gaps between organisations.

3. Background: In-between and among Job Coaches and Social Workers

In Sweden, social work is the legal responsibility of the municipalities and is governed by Swedish law under the Social Services Act (Swedish Code of Statutes, 2001). Some social work may be outsourced to private firms, but the investigation and assessment of clients, the so-called exercise of authority, which is the case in relation to social assistance benefits, has to be performed within the realms of the public sector. The social workers in the social assistance benefits office work to determine if clients are eligible for social assistance. If they are, the social workers should work with the client to get them financially self-sufficient. "Financially self-sufficient" could, in this case, mean to receive an early pension or social insurance, but the ideal is to get a job. The Swedish welfare state is firmly rooted in the idea of employment as the norm. In this model, those living off the state through social assistance should be the exception. In later years, since a conservative-liberalist government took office in 2006, the norm of employment has been further emphasised to also include those who are considered to be 'far from' the labour market—the sick, the physically and mentally disabled, the recovering addicts—who should be investigated and tested to determine if they are able to work, at least part-time.

This work is organised through the municipal jobcentres. These are placed at the municipal level, while the Swedish public employment agency is a state agency which organises employment agencies through-

out Sweden. The Swedish public employment agency has, apart from job placement, counselling, work-related rehabilitation, and the directing of people to labour market programmes, the role of ensuring that people receiving unemployment benefits are at the disposal of the labour market. The municipal jobcentres, as opposed to the Swedish public employment service, work solely with the unemployed with social problems and/or people receiving social assistance benefits. These jobcentres have been in place since 1998 but became a general standard in 2008. At the jobcentres, the clients are assigned a job coach and a job matcher to find work that is suitable for the client. In order to do so, they map and assess the client's ability to work and they have a number of measures at their disposal that are specifically catered to them.

Many, if not most, of the clients on social assistance should be referred to the jobcentres. The end goal of both the social services and the jobcentres is for the client to become financially self-reliant, preferably through work. This necessarily involves collaboration between the social assistance office and the jobcentres. In the municipality where I did fieldwork, the social services and jobcentres are not organised as a one-stop shop (Minas, 2014), but belonged to the social services administration and the labour market administration respectively, and the work organisation did not support working together. Collaboration between the organisations instead had to be performed through routines. The assessment-instrument by the four documents that was described at the beginning of the article was part of realising collaboration and the main purpose of the assessment-instrument network meetings was to support the use of the four documents, thereby establishing collaboration.

The four documents mirrored how the work was organised in the social assistance office and between the social assistance office and the jobcentres. The social assistance benefits offices are often divided into two units: the intake unit and the social assistance unit. The intake unit makes the initial assessment of whether the person should be handled by the social services or not, and they use document number 1 to do the vetting. They then send the client to the jobcentre, where the job coach uses document number 2. In the social services office where I did fieldwork, the intake unit also handled document number 3, though in other offices this might be done by the social assistance unit. The social assistance unit takes over if a client has long-term problems and needs more resources to become financially self-reliant. The social assistance unit should then use document number 4, the plan for change, together with the jobcentre.

4. Methods: Meetings, Networks, and Documents

The article is based on data from an on-going ethnographic study, performed with Lovisa Näslund Stockholm University, of the Swedish Social Services, more specifically social assistance benefits within a municipality in Sweden. The research is based on participant observation, interviews, and document studies. During the autumn of 2016, spring and autumn of 2017, and autumn of 2018, we have performed participant observation, sometimes together, sometimes separately, doing "meeting ethnography" (Sandler & Thedvall, 2017) in different practitioners' networks meetings: fourteen hours in the assessment-instrument network meetings; twelve hours in the Head of Unit network meetings; fifteen hours in the method network meetings; six hours in the application (in Swedish: *tillämpning*) network; and two hours in the Lex Sarah network meeting.

We have also performed participant observation in different workplace education meetings within the municipality: three hours in the introduction to assessment meetings; fourteen hours in the orientation days for new hires meeting; seven hours on the orientation day for new hires for social assistance meetings; three hours in the Head of Unit introduction to assessment meetings; and seven hours in motivational interviewing (in relation to the assessment-instrument) meetings. Finally, we have attended a variety of meetings in a social assistance benefits office such as case managing meetings, motivational interviewing group meetings, unit meeting; morning meetings and workplace meetings.

During the meetings, we took field notes of what was said and to which we have afterwards added notes on the atmosphere of the room, the seating, attendees, and informal conversations during breaks, beginnings and ends. We have also performed participant observation of the everyday workings of the social assistance benefits office from which we also have field notes. Furthermore, we have interviewed, together and separately, nine (9) people within the administration and thirty (30) social workers from different social assistance benefits offices for about one to one and a half hours each, asking about work processes and instruments. This fieldwork has been performed in order to understand the social services sector in general and social work within social assistance in particular. It is part of a larger project where we investigate the use of different knowledge models and instruments and how it affects the working environment in the social services. One of these instruments was the assessment documents that are in focus in this article. This fieldwork serves as a necessary background for my understanding of the collaboration between the social services and the jobcentres in the municipality.

Through this fieldwork, I developed an interest in the collaboration between the social services and the jobcentres in the municipality. As mentioned in the introduction, the social assistance benefits offices celebrated collaboration by necessity. Their clients often had several social problems that were not solvable by the social services alone. The jobcentre was such an actor, and by performing participant observation in the different networks and workplace education meetings that were jointly run by the social services administration and the

labour market administration in the municipality, I was able to study collaboration in situ through meetings. Of the meetings mentioned above, the collaborative meetings included the assessment-instrument-network meetings, the introduction-to-the-assessment-instrument meeting, Head-of-Unit-introduction-to-assessment-instrument meetings, and the motivational-interviewing-in-relation-to-the-assessment-instrument meeting (altogether twenty-seven hours, ninety-two pages of field notes). In these meetings, the main purpose was to establish collaboration between the social assistance benefit offices and the jobcentres, and the main tool worked on in the meetings to continue this collaboration outside of the meeting rooms was the assessment-instrument of the four documents. The municipality, the social assistance benefits office, the jobcentre, and the people that appear in the article are anonymous.

I came to understand the meetings I attended as gaps in the everyday work processes of social workers and job coaches. It was a space that halted on-going work and where they were set to collaborate and find ways to continue this collaboration outside of the meeting rooms. I use the gap as an analytical tool to understand these collaborator meetings as productive spaces where work processes are halted and uncertain. One of the instruments discussed and worked on in order to make collaboration a standard way of working between the social services and the jobcentres was the assessment-instrument documents in its four parts: the "telephone-interview assessment", document number 1 (six pages); the "job plan", document number 2 (seven pages); the "assessment during the client's first visit", document number 3 (five pages); and the "plan for change", document number 4 (two pages). I have examined these four documents, analysing the information the documents produce about the persons through its questions, in order to understand the gaps and bridges in the content of the four documents. I have done so by using the notion of the documentary person (Hull, 2012). In this analytical work, I have also used the user manual for the assessment-instrument developed by the municipality (twenty-six pages) to understand the intent of the documents.

I have also analysed the documents as material objects in their own right, and what it signifies for them to be divided into four different documents when, in reality, they should be combined into one and the same.

5. Producing Documentary Person(s)

The four documents were set to produce one documentary person that was mapped and assessed and through the process should be turned into a financially self-reliant person. If the social services establish that a person was in need of, and entitled to, social assistance benefits then they should refer the client to the jobcentre for a job coach to map the client's work experience, health, education, previous interventions, and ability to work. The client should then return to the social services, which would continue to investigate the client to understand if there were any social hindrances for getting a job. Finally, the job coach and the social worker should make a plan for change with the client. All this should be performed in a sequence using assessment documents number 1 to number 4.

Assessment document number 1, "telephone-interview assessment", is used in the first meeting with the client. Document number 1 includes questions such as the name, identification number, civil status, living conditions, residence permit, reasons for applying, children, employment situation, possible health insurance, and financial situation of the household to determine if the person is entitled to social assistance benefits. Issues that need to be investigated are whether the person has the right to be in Sweden if the person belongs to the municipality s/he is applying to, efforts to find other ways to support herself/himself, other benefits, and assets and debt. The documentary person that is produced through document number 1 is the financial situation's person. It is a mapping of the person's household, her/his financial situation, and efforts to find support in other ways. It is a survey of efforts and means.

Assessment document number 2, "job plan", is used by the jobcentre and includes the name, identification number, education, previous work experience, ability to work, hindrances (such as convicted of a felony), and whether the client has a CV. The client is also asked to do a self-assessment of his/her possibilities of getting a job. Again, the client is asked about living conditions and family situation as in document number 1, but this time in relation to how it affects their ability to work. What needs to be investigated is what languages are spoken and if Swedish is among them, if the person has a driver's licence, if he/she reports to the regular employment agency, upholds some kind of employment benefits, if the person's mental and physical health will affect their ability to work. The person also needs to determine what needs to be done to improve her/his chances to find a job. The documentary person produced in document number 2 is the working person: the ability to work and the qualifications for doing so. It is a survey of the education, work experience, and ability to work.

Assessment document number 3, "assessment at the client's first visit", is used by the social services at the client's first visit to the social services. If document number 1 is used to quickly assess whether the person is eligible during an on-going crisis, document number 3 is used to dig further into the possible reasons for the need for social assistance benefits and investigate whether assets have been sold, such as a car or house that could be used to support the client. It again includes questions to investigate the financial situation of the household and the living conditions. It also includes similar questions as in document number 2 regarding education, previous employment, internships, or work training. Furthermore, the client needs to make a self-assessment of physical and mental health and if it affects his/her ability to work.

There are questions asked about possible addiction issues, access to a social network and family, children, possible violence and threats in close relations, legal situation, social situation, and short-term and long-term goals. The documentary person produced is the social problem person: the ability to work is documented through physical and mental health, social networks, addiction, violence, and legal situation. It is a survey of social abilities, social problems, and the continued right to receive social assistance benefits.

Assessment document number 4, the "plan for change", should preferably be completed with the job coach in a three-party meeting with the client, but most often it is used by the social services alone when investigating clients that have been more than three months within the social services. Document number 4 focuses on change and on what the client wants to achieve. The client has to find the answer to questions such as what the benefits would be for her/him to become financially self-sufficient, what needs to be done to reach the goals that were defined, the steps to take, and possible hindrances, as well as the time plan and monitoring. The client also has to make a self-assessment of the ability to be self-supporting within three months. Finally, the client needs to agree to make certain efforts towards becoming self-supporting. If these efforts are not made, then the client might lose the right to social assistance benefits. The documentary person produced is the changing, motivated, empowered person working towards self-support. It is a survey of the ability to change, the support needed to change, and the actions required to make a change.

The four documents mirrored four different parts in the work process, producing four different "documentary persons": the efforts and means person; the ability and experience necessary to work person; the social abilities and social problem person; and finally the changing person. There are some bridges between the documentary persons that have to do with living conditions and family situation, and previous working experiences focusing on the ability to work. The four documents also, by their separation, form movable material entities where the edges between documents form a gap. Documents enact on-going political and bureaucratic life which also make the gaps in work processes and organisation visible. Though there were some bridges between the documents, the documentary persons were not blending, but rather emphasised the separation between them because clients had to repeat answers to the same questions. The only aspect that actually indicated that it was part of the same process was the numbers. Work was needed to make the four documents blend into one work process. This work was partly performed in meetings.

6. Meetings as Smoothing Machines

One of the three-hour assessment-instrument network meetings took place in the spring of 2017. Those able to attend these meetings were representatives from the jobcentres and the social assistance offices in the municipality. Not all came to each meeting, but there were about twenty people in the room on the four occasions when they held the meetings during the year (2017; we did fieldwork in all four). The people in the room were experienced job coaches and social workers.

We were sitting in a meeting room in the labour market administration in the municipality. The room was filled with social workers and job coaches seated along the u-shaped table. Ada and Gunilla, who were administrators from the social services administration and the labour market administration respectively, were chairing the meeting. Gunilla explained that a study of the assessment documents had shown that the four documents worked as separate documents. She emphasised that they should work as *one* routine. This was one and a half years ago, she said, and since then we have been working to make it operational. Gunilla continued and reminded them that they had been working on the information transfer between the different documents.

In the digital systems of the jobcentre, they had now created a space which both the job coaches and social workers could access. After document number 1 was completed by the social services through the telephone interview, the client would be remitted to the jobcentre through the space created in the digital system. Through discussions in a former meeting, they had agreed on what information was needed. The transferred information should be of importance for the job coach, such as the need for an interpreter, whether the client was on part-time sick leave, or if the client was waiting for a decision from the unemployment benefits fund.

When the jobcentre had their first meeting with the client and completed document number 2, the social workers and job coaches in the network agreed that the information that needed to be transferred should relate to the ability to work. It might be the case that the client does not have full-time childcare, or other difficulties impeding them from taking on a job and following the planned course of action. The information transfer from document number 3 should feed into document number 4, but the jobcentre should also be informed through the digital system regarding social issues that affect the client's planning at the jobcentre. One must assess whether there is, for example, an addiction problem or need for support that affects the client's ability to find and keep a job.

The social workers and the job coaches had worked on what information needed to be transferred in the network meeting, but they had also worked towards being able to share the information through the digital system. In and around the meetings was one of the few spaces where they had the time to think about the process and how it would be best performed, so a great deal of work was actually done in the meeting through breakout sessions, working in small groups. The sharing of information in the digital system was a result of such work.

Gunilla informed us that this was now implemented. The information could be transferred within the shared space of the digital system. In this way, the assessment-instrument network meetings worked as a "smoothing machine", (Bogard, 2000) blending and smoothing the gaps between documents, turning separate work processes into one by contributing to forming routines for working in collaboration through the digital system.

The meetings also worked as liminal, productive spaces where issues could be brought up that might set off the process in another direction. One illustration was given when one of the representatives of a social services office asked about the Secrecy Act: "What can we actually write in the information transfer box in the digital system?" Gunilla stepped in and explained that there is a button in the digital system called the "consent-button", which meant that they had to ask the client if they could share the information with the jobcentre and this button made the information transfer possible. One of the social workers from another office objected and said that this button only ensured that the client agreed that the social worker could contact the jobcentre, not transfer the actual information. There was a discussion in the group regarding whether the information transfer that they set out to do was actually illegal. It might be that they would not be able to do this at all. At one point, the whole process seemed to be turned on its head. Ada, chairing the meeting, quickly contacted the lawyers within the municipality to ask about the Secrecy Act and consent. She returned with information. If clients agreed to contact between the social services and the jobcentre, they had also agreed that the information could be transferred. The meeting here became the gap, the liminal space, where how to work and what is needed to be done in order for the four documents to be understood as one routine was up for debate, not stabilised. The meeting became a productive space that opened up the work process and laid it bare for inspection and possible alterations.

6.1. The Information Transfer Box as a Productive Space

A half-year later the work process was laid bare for inspection again in the meeting, opening up a space for moving in another direction. Gunilla started the meeting by reminding the group that they had been working with information transfer between the social services and the jobcentre and it should work as routine. Then Gunilla said:

> But then I have understood that the routine has not become a routine. This isn't an interrogation. We would like to know how you work. Do your social workers transfer information to the jobcentre's digital system? Are you able to find the place where to put the information, technically, in the digital system? And you, who are working as job coaches: Do you transfer information to the social workers? It's important

that you tell us what you need to make it work. The politicians think this is already implemented.

Gunilla and Ada encouraged everyone to share by going around the table. Karin from social services office Elm said that they had understood how to do it, but not many of the social workers were actually doing it. She continued and said that they, in fact, did not send that many to the jobcentre. The next in line, Malena from social services office Birch had the same story. Some of the social workers were transferring information through the digital system, especially if it was something important. She continued and said that she believed that the social workers responsible for document number 1 thought that it was enough to refer the client to the jobcentre and not transfer information. One problem she mentioned was that when the client came to her to do document number 3, they might not yet have been to the jobcentre. Similar stories were repeated around the room.

The documentary persons produced, and the materiality of the documents, created gaps between documents that were supposed to be blended through the writing of a summary of the documentary person. The information transfer box in the digital system worked the gap between the edges of the four documents. It became a productive space where moments for alternate directions where created. In this space, the obligation to write a summary of what had been discovered in their respective documents for the other department to see was treated with some ease. The network meetings worked as reminders to blend the gaps between the documents, turning the different work processes within the social services and the jobcentres into one.

6.2. The Sequence Disturbed

The fact that the jobcentre had not performed document number 2 before the social services initiated number 3 also had to do with work processes within the social services. As one representative from a social services office, Malin, said:

> It used to be that we did [document] number 1 then waited until the jobcentre had made [document] number 2, then [document] number 3. But we have changed our way of working. Now, we do number 1 and number 3 before we remit to the jobcentre. There is so much information we get when doing number 3 and sometimes this investigation shows that the client is not ready for the jobcentre.

The unit within the social services that worked with social assistance benefits was often divided into two units: the intake unit and the social assistance office. The intake unit made the initial assessment of whether the person should be handled by the social services or not, and they used document number 1 to do the vetting. In the social services office where I did fieldwork, the intake unit

also handled document number 3, though in other offices this might be done by the social assistance unit. The social assistance unit took over if a client has long-term problems and needed more resources to become financially independent. It might be clients with an addiction problem or mental disabilities, and the social assistance unit worked with the clients to try to encourage them to change and want to become financially self-reliant. The social assistance unit used document number 4, the plan for change. It should be performed together with the jobcentre, but it might also be the case that clients needed to complete a plan for change, document number 4, before they could be referred to the jobcentre. This was especially true for long-term clients dependent on social assistance benefits for several years, even decades.

In the office where I did fieldwork, they usually performed both documents number 1 and number 3, and even number 4 before they referred to the jobcentre. If that was the case, they referred directly to a three-party meeting because the clients had too many problems for the jobcentre to handle alone. In fact, some of the jobcentres did not accept clients if they had not been investigated according to number 3, because too many clients had been sent to the jobcentre who were not ready for a job coach or to find a job. This was the case for several other districts. Ebba from office Oak told us that they referred to the jobcentre after having performed both number 1 and number 3. Camilla from office Pine explained that almost all of their clients had multiple social problems. If they referred to the jobcentre, they had already performed documents number 1, number 3, and number 4, and they had also used another documentation instrument that dug deeper into the social situation of the client. In the meeting, it became obvious that the sequence between documents number 1 to number 4 was disturbed.

The gaps created by making them into four separate documents had been productively used to change the order in a way that suited the clients they had. The meeting became a productive space that opened up the work process and laid it bare for inspection and made visible how the documents were used in practice. The meeting provided alternatives to the official routine regarding the assessment documents. This, of course, had to move up the hierarchy to become a formal decision, but when I asked how the routine was now, a year later, when doing participant observation in a social assistance benefits office, performing number 1, number 3, and number 4 before referring to the jobcentre was now the routine. In other words, the meeting had made this way of working visible and, as a productive space, altered the official routine.

7. Conclusion: Gaps as Productive Spaces

In this article, I have investigated collaboration through the notion of gaps. The municipality had set up tools to encourage collaboration between the social services and the jobcentre to blend the gaps in the work process of turning social assistance benefits and jobcentre clients into financially self-reliant persons. The tools used were the four documents and the assessment-instrument meeting. By using the gap as an analytical tool, I have focused on the productiveness of the gap. I have understood gaps as an in-between position, a productive and liminal space, where different social worlds meet, creating moments for moving in alternate directions, creating alternative worlds.

The four documents were set to blend and smooth the gaps between the different worlds of social workers and job coaches to create a flow in the process of turning clients into financially self-reliant citizens by following the sequence in the documents from number 1 to number 4, viewing the client as one documentary person. The assessment-instrument network meetings were themselves a gap between organisations. They were reminders of the cut between the social services and the jobcentres while at the same time intended to work as a "smoothing machine" (Bogard, 2000) to cut and grind to cover, coat, and blend the gap between organisation and documents. The meeting itself also worked as a continuous reminder to smooth the gaps for them to disappear.

No smoothing can occur without a break, a separation (Bogard, 2000; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), and the four documents were each moveable, material entities with clear edges between documents, forming gaps. Their numbers did not only belong to a particular part of the work process and different organisations, but they also each produced four different documentary persons: the financial situation person, the working person, the social problem person, and the empowered person.

Social workers and job coaches continuously treated the documents separately. The document numbers and the information transfer box were meant to work as blenders between organisations, but as the sequence between the documents had been disturbed in practice due to changes in the work process, the blending of the gap between them was not realised.

During fieldwork, I saw how the professionals noted the gaps, but they also showed the productiveness of the gap between the documents, as the gaps made it possible to change the order. The social workers and the job coaches had collaborated in this process of changing the order. It was not the intended collaboration, but it grew out of pragmatism. The assessment-instrument network meeting worked as a productive space for this to happen. It laid the work processes bare for inspection, making it possible to move in another direction, making sure that the routine was not focused on the sequence, but instead on what was working in practice. The meeting became a liminal, productive space whereby practices circulated, policies took form, and policies were worked out. The gap could then be understood as a space where collaboration is played out and formed rather than the pitfall that should be blended and smoothed.

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Article

Gendered Practices in Child Protection: Shifting Mother Accountability and Father Invisibility in Situations of Domestic Violence

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Abstract

This article reports on an exploratory, qualitative, multiple-methods study that included individual interviews and a focus group with child protection services (CPS) workers in a large city in Alberta, Canada. The findings illuminate current CPS worker practices in situations of domestic violence where inclusion and exclusion decisions are made for service provision, and the ways in which documents reflect these day-to-day practices; how service user descriptions are constructed and reconstructed, the social problem of domestic violence conceptualized, and the ways in which professional development training encourages critical thinking about existing practices to create new solutions for families experiencing domestic violence. Thematic analysis reveals three themes about CPS workers' experience: 1) current practices reflect invisibility of men and accountability of women; 2) personal and professional shift in perspectives on who to work with, gender expectations, and how CPS are delivered; and 3) reflexive practice into potential intervention strategies and professional development training. The findings suggest specific recommendations for practice including the need to engage men in child welfare practice, shift perspective about service delivery with families experiencing domestic violence, and account for gender norms and practices in service delivery.

1. Introduction

This article presents a described shift in child welfare practices as a result of professional development training and the response of child protection services (CPS) workers to the training. Prior research recommends the shifting of child protection practices in situations of domestic violence to enable the support of mothers (survivors) while holding fathers (perpetrators) accountable (Hughes, Chau, & Vokrri, 2015). Our study, situated in Alberta, Canada, adds an important contribution to the research literature specific to changing practices in child protection.

The prevalence of families who are affected by domestic violence in Alberta is high, growing along with the number of child witnesses to domestic violence (Government of Alberta, 2014). Alberta has seen a 2% increase since 2014, ranking third highest out of all Canadian provinces for domestic violence (Statistics Canada, 2015). Similarly, according to the 2008 Canadian Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS), one of the most frequently occurring categories of substantiated cases of child maltreatment (34% or 29,259 cases) was exposure to intimate partner violence (Black, Trocmé, Fallon, & MacLaurin, 2008).

Researchers note that professionals providing services and support to families who have experienced do-

mestic violence often lack training around domestic violence (Fotheringham, Dunbar, & Hensley, 2013; Hughes et al., 2015). In Alberta, there are multiple influences that guide child protection policies and practices when engaging with families experiencing domestic violence. For example, risk assessments are guided by the "best interests of the child" standard, and domestic violence is recognized as one factor while, at the same time, the 2003 Provincial Family Law Act maintains a presumption after marital breakdown that both parents are guardians of their children (Boyd & Bertrand, 2016). Indeed, a study of legal professionals' perceptions of shared parenting reveals an understanding that shared parenting rates are higher in Alberta than in other parts of Canada (Boyd & Bertrand, 2016). In neighboring British Columbia, child protection policy acknowledges the need to keep mothers safe and support her in the care of her children (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2017).

Drawing on the White Ribbon Campaign's issue brief *Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender-Based Violence* (Minerson, Carolo, Dinner, & Jones, 2011), and the findings from Alberta-based Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence (Wells et al., 2013), a local collective of service providers and academics created curriculum training for the community that focused on examining male normative ideas (male norms) about masculinity as a means of violence prevention. The curriculum workshop was piloted with local professionals working in the fields of sexual and domestic violence. A local child protection organization in Alberta, Canada, requested the workshop to facilitate their understanding of the link between masculinity and domestic violence. In our article, we explore CPS workers' perceptions and current practices with families experiencing domestic violence, and CPS workers' understanding of the link between domestic violence and masculinity. Our findings illuminate CPS workers' reconstructions of service users and child welfare practices. Specifically, CPS workers indicate that they are now more critical of the parent role, moving beyond mothers as the sole responsible parent, and they make further attempts to engage fathers in their services. Additionally, CPS workers state that they no longer write statements in the agency files to implicate mothers as solely responsible for child protection, and they include information about the father in the agency data base.

2. Literature Review

Domestic violence is a major social problem in Canada. When children were present in the home during violent incidents, 59% of women reported that their children heard or saw the violent act (Statistics Canada, 2013). Within a context of violence, mothers are held to a higher standard than fathers in protecting their children (Boyd, 2017; Hughes et al., 2015). Hughes et al. (2015) point out that women experiencing violence shoulder inappropriate blame from CPS workers for the impact of the vio-

lence on their children; the systems that are designed to protect mothers, instead, construct her as an unfit parent. Additionally, the family law system may judge mothers more harshly for not protecting children from violence, and CPS may question the mother's motivation to keep their child safe (Boyd, 2017; Hughes et al., 2015). Jevne and Andenaes (2015) highlight this same finding in a study of 15 parents, where two mothers expressed safety concerns to professionals, leading to the loss of maternal custody, with limited supervised access to her children. In a study examining how Family Courts remove children from their parents, Mosoff, Grant, Boyd and Lindy (2017) suggest there are numerous such examples of mothers losing custody of her children to the state in our Canadian child welfare system. The authors found that CPS removed children from their mothers in situations when the father or male figure in the home created a risk to the children through violence or criminality (Mosoff et al., 2017), representing the gender bias that Bancroft and Silverman (2002) describe in the United States.

Women endure scrutiny for their inability to protect their children in situations of domestic violence while fathers are under-involved in the process of keeping their children safe (Alaggia, Gadalla, Shlonsky, Jenney, & Daciuk, 2015; Humphreys & Absler, 2011). According to Alaggia et al. (2015), 63% of perpetrating parents (predominantly fathers) were unreachable during child welfare investigations; while the survivor of violence (predominantly mothers) were investigated in over 90% of all situations. These statistics translate into potential practice of convenience (CPS workers engage with mothers only) rendering the perpetrator invisible.

The Government of Canada's report on child abuse and neglect found that domestic violence was present in 34% of substantiated child welfare investigations (Black et al., 2008), while child intervention staff in Alberta continue to receive less than five hours of family violence-related training (Snyder & Babins-Wagner, 2012). This is particularly relevant, considering that exposure to appropriate training tends to lower workers' negative views of families experiencing domestic violence, increase empathy with survivors, and increase workers' willingness to engage perpetrators, holding them responsible for their actions (Snyder & Babins-Wagner, 2012).

In Alberta, changes to child protection and family laws have recently tried to shift current "mother blaming" practices (Humphreys & Absler, 2011). In child welfare there has been provincial adoption of "Signs of Safety", an internationally recognized strengths-based, safety-oriented approach to family casework. Also impacting CPS practices is a change in family law adding exposure to domestic violence as a mandatory reporting requirement and a factor within the "best interest of the child" standard (Cross, Mathews, Tonmyr, Scott, & Ouimet, 2012; Family Law Act, 2003). The legal system increasingly recognizes that physical violence and coercive control are important components of domestic violence;

this shift is significant because family court has historically minimized or denied the destructive presence of coercive control, usually of men over women, through physical intimidation, social isolation, withholding access to finances or resources, or through seeking partial custody of the child (Elizabeth, 2015).

Despite these changes, some research indicates that CPS continue to hold mothers to higher parenting standards than fathers (Hughes et al., 2015; Humphreys & Absler, 2011). Following incidents of domestic violence, mothers become the focus of child welfare investigations with mothers reporting that they feel a lack of support in addressing the problems of domestic violence (Hughes et al., 2015). The courts maintain different parenting expectations for mothers and fathers in child custody decisions; the family court system often weighs positively fathers' expressions of caring about their children, while taking for granted the day-to-day labour involved in caring for the children, a task still overwhelmingly performed by mothers (Boyd, 2013). Further, family law courts routinely order father access to children despite male violence against women and children (Boyd, 2013), while mothers can be perceived to have failed at protecting her children in situations of domestic violence despite the absence of her abusive behaviour (Mosoff et al., 2017).

Research about frontline CPS workers' experiences and their understandings of the linkages between masculinity and domestic violence is limited (Wells et al., 2015). Shift: The Project to End Domestic Violence, an Alberta-based research project, reveals: 1) only a small number of programs are focused on domestic violence prevention or advancing gender equality; and, 2) a link exists between current norms of masculinity and domestic violence (Wells et al., 2015). Much of the province's current domestic violence programming is focused on crisis response and victim services, though some programs have emerged to support fathers, such as the Alberta Father Involvement Initiative, and the province has seen a growing number of school-based initiatives promoting healthy masculinities, relationship skills and gender equality among boys (Wells et al., 2015).

The lack of information on CPS workers' understanding of the link between masculinity and domestic violence represents a significant gap in the academic and practice research with potential implications for the ways in which CPS workers interact with fathers and mothers. In naming parents as either mothers or fathers we are not intending to ignore same sex or nonbinary-identified parents, however in this study, CPS workers spoke of a parent gender binary. Some researchers claim that explicitly highlighting the role of gender in child protection may lead to a greater understanding of CPS workers' challenges engaging fathers in discussions about their children's safety (Baum, 2015; Scourfield, Smail, & Butler, 2015). Recent changes in British Columbia reflect the inclusion of a family development response (FDR) in child protection when domestic violence is present wherein mothers, fathers and children are included in safety assessment and planning. However, child-centered and mother-centered approaches appropriately trump FDR when the safety of the mother and children remains a concern, therefore, these families are not expected to participate in couple counselling, family mediation, anger management, or visitation arrangements (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2017).

Our study examined the perceptions of CPS workers after their participation in professional development that consisted of a full day of curriculum training (lectures, videos, small and large group discussions) inviting reflection on personal perceptions of male violence, masculinity, and gender roles in relation to child protection practices. Specifically, we wanted to explore two questions. First, how do CPS workers understand current practices with families experiencing domestic violence in the ways they construct mothers and fathers? Second, in what ways does professional development training specific to the link between domestic violence and masculinity support CPS workers to shift their practices with families and how they record family information? Ethics approval for the study was received from the Internal Review Board.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design

This study uses a qualitative research design, seeking information directly from participants about their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994/2011). This methodology allowed for a greater insight into the child protection worker experience of the curriculum workshop and their understanding of the link between masculinity and domestic violence. Multiple methods were used in this study including two rounds of individual interviews and a focus group. Following the interviews, we engaged participants in a focus group to gather qualitative data during a two-hour session with a homogenous group; child protection workers (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The focus group provided greater clarity of the interview data as participants shared further insights and connections (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

The research team consisted of the primary investigator (PI) and two graduate research assistants (RAs). We received permission from the Alberta government to recruit CPS workers for this study following a request from a local child welfare agency seeking professional development curriculum training for their CPS workers that would focus on examining the link between male norms and domestic violence. The professional development workshop was facilitated by one of the creators of the curriculum training, a local professional and member of the Calgary Domestic Violence Collective and subcommittee member of Engaging Men and Boys (EM&Bs). Twelve CPS workers from a local child welfare agency in

a large city in Alberta, Canada, engaged in the full-day professional development curriculum training workshop. Utilizing purposive sampling to allow all participants opportunity to answer the research questions (Patton, 2002), the PI and one RA recruited study participants from the twelve attending CPS workers, taking time at the beginning of the professional development session to share an overview of the study and leaving behind the RA contact information for potential participants. Participants were invited to be part of the study based on their interest in sharing their work experiences in domestic violence and their willingness to contribute to curriculum development focused on male norms and violence prevention. Interested participants were invited to provide contact information for a follow-up interview. Nine participants initially indicated an interest in the study, while seven participants followed through with two interviews.

The CPS workers belonged to units within the organization that oversee families involved in domestic violence. Participants were university educated with a bachelor's or master's degree in a range of disciplines such as social work, psychology, counselling psychology, and child studies. Participants had between three and sixteen years of experience working in child welfare, and their ages ranged from 30 to 58 years old. Six of the participants self-identified as female, and one male, while all identified as Caucasian.

Data collection included one-on-one interviews (1.5 hours long) conducted by a RA with each participant sharing their perceptions and experience about the linkages between norms of masculinity and domestic violence, including what they learned in the focused training, and their understanding of their perceived training needs. There were six interview questions, each with further prompts. For example, interview question one was about participants' experience with the EM&Bs' training, followed by four prompts including, anything new that they didn't know, anything surprising, anything they didn't agree with, and how they understood the link between domestic violence and masculinity. Question two asked about the ways in which they have been influenced by the training including a shift in their thinking. Question three explored the ways in which the training will influence their future practice with perpetrators, survivors and children. The remaining questions focused on other professionals who might benefit from this professional development and future professional development they would like to see incorporated in their workplace. A second round of individual interviews was held to further explore participant descriptions and meanings of their experiences. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim.

Based on the findings from the initial analysis of the interview data, the research team drafted an interview guide for a focus group, also transcribed verbatim. Of the seven study participants, five agreed to engage in the focus group. The two-hour focus group, facilitated by the PI and one RA, provided a means of member check and ad-

ditional data collection, such that the focus group members reflected on the initial emergent themes in terms of how the data resonated or did not resonate with their understandings and experiences. Analysis of the interview data and focus group data allowed for triangulation and increased trustworthiness of the study findings.

3.2. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected (Clarke & Braun, 2017). While recruitment for the initial interviews took place on the day of the curriculum workshop, recruitment for the focus group, data collection and data analysis were an iterative process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After the interviews, the research team reviewed the transcripts multiple times. During analysis, the data was manually organized into codes, categories, themes and sub-themes to identify patterns in the data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Two members of the research team, the PI and one RA, independently developed codes from the raw data using a line-by-line approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A table was utilized to capture raw data, codes, categories and themes for ease of organization and review. Categories were created to organize the codes and reviewed for consistency. Together, two research members reviewed the codes and categories to create the initial themes and subsequent sub-themes that were shared with study participants during the focus group. Thematic analysis was used to analyze focus group data, following a similar process described in the interview data analysis.

4. Findings

The researchers identified three overarching themes which were illustrated in multiple ways by various study participants. Themes were further reduced to include sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis describes existing everyday processes of parental inclusion and exclusion in the child welfare system. Themes are illustrated through participant quotes.

4.1. Theme 1: Current Child Protection Practices Reflect the Invisibility of Men and Accountability of Women

This theme represented the ways in which participants talked about current practices including what occurred day to day in their work, areas of practice that went unchallenged and where they believed they lacked critical awareness, gaps in service regarding male inclusion in accountability, and unexamined biases regarding the role of mothers. Many participants expressed that current professional development practices excluded domestic violence. They also noted that current CPS worker practices in domestic violence cases revealed a bias toward mother accountability and father invisibility, which they explained became clear to the workers themselves during the professional development day. For example, par-

ticipants described a number of myths that drove their practice, which appeared to influence their day-to-day practice decisions, as indicated in the following quote:

> We are feeding into those myths, that it's the woman who is in charge to ensure the safety for the children and we just sort of let men off and it is just sort of that myth, you know, that they [fathers] are there to be the bread winners.

Fear, safety, and relationships were some of the reasons that participants provided for their decision to work exclusively with mothers. For example, CPS workers feared working with fathers for their own safety and feared destroying relationships with mothers. One participant suggested: "Sometimes it is the risk thing…they are, like, well, he is violent, we can't go to the home". Another participant indicated: "It's more an alignment, like, we work with [the] mom…we don't want to risk that relationship if we work with [the] dad".

As a result of the myths, fears and concerns for safety, CPS workers developed constructions in child welfare practices presented next as a sub-theme.

4.1.1. Constructions in Child Welfare Practices

Participants identified constructions in daily practice such as parenting responsibilities and included who to engage, responsibilities for child protection, and CPS workers' role. For example, parental responsibility focused on the parent who could be engaged and those who cannot be engaged were excluded. Participants noted they avoided father engagement because of a lack of response, as noted here:

> You get a family violence file, and then you work on calling [the] mom, and you do safety planning with her, and you can't get a hold of the dad and you just go, well, I tried and he wouldn't engage, and then you let it go.

The role and responsibility of protecting children was left to the parent more easily accessible, often the mother who was caring for the children. The CPS worker then viewed their role and the responsibility inherent with a mandate of protecting children, as the enforcer; the CPS workers enforced the role of mother as protector as identified here:

> In child intervention services, I think we still largely focus on the women's role in it…it is around protecting her child and leaving her partner and, like, enforcing an emergency protection order, or a restraining order or whatever kind of, like, legal sanction she has, like, being the enforcer of it.

In their role of enforcer, CPS workers held mothers to be the one who takes responsibility. In the case discussed

here that may imply that they use the administrative route, acquiring the correct document and following the legislation. They explained that they used to expect:

> [Mom to] go to court and get a restraining order and follow through with the terms and conditions. And our legislation, our legal authority on that child will correspond with your ability on following through with the protection order that you have.

Indeed, participants asserted the commonly held belief that service was no longer required when the mother was protecting the children and documentation in the file reflected this practice; for example, "I look back at [the] history and what happened….The file is closed because mom is protecting, that would be common language".

4.2. Theme 2: Personal and Professional Shifts in Perspective About Who to Work with, Gender Expectations, and How CPS Services Are Delivered

Following the professional development day, the CPS workers shared some of the shifts that had occurred in their thinking about their practice and the way they went about their work. For example, they said that they contact fathers and schedule meetings with him, they have discussion in their team meetings about their meetings with fathers, and they include information about fathers in the agency data base. They discussed the need to engage men in their practice, to shift their perspective about what child protection meant, and to account for gender norms and expectations in their understanding of service delivery. CPS workers began to reconstruct the meaning of child protection as participants noted the importance of critically examining their use of language and how this shifted for them following the training. For example, participants shared how their perspectives and previously held knowledge were challenged:

> But I never just thought about, like, men, like, that being the issue. About how they were raised, or their beliefs, or what they think about masculinity, and what it means to them. And I never thought about that, so it [professional development] kind of challenged that.

Participants agreed that the training helped them to deepen their understanding of the link between masculinity and domestic violence and shifted their perspectives as presented in the following sub-theme.

4.2.1. Developing Reconstructions of Child Welfare Practices

The shift in perspective for CPS workers began a dialogue about reconstructing child protection. Participants' greater understanding was evident when they discussed the need to include fathers in conversations about domestic violence.

Just asking, have you talked to dad, does dad have a network, and then I have actually gone with workers now who are starting to have meetings with dad and having those conversations started that maybe wouldn't have [happened] before.

CPS workers indicate that they are having in person meetings with fathers at the office, inviting them in for discussions and constructing him as a parent with responsibility for child protection. This new understanding has participants rethinking domestic violence, and the impacts of how service might be provided as noted by one participant: "What I am finding now, you know, if you have a little more empathy and kind of look at things a little deeper, then you might actually make some more lasting change". And another participant here as they considered including the father in the role of parent with responsibility for child protection:

I don't know if it's that we think that the perpetrator can't change or that it's too much work to ask them to change or what that is, but I know we do that all the time. So, I think we need to change that in our practice altogether.

4.3. Theme 3: Reflexive Practice into Potential Intervention Strategies and Professional Development Training

The professional development day when CPS workers gathered together with colleagues and the facilitator raised for them significant areas requiring further development. This included the need for more reflexive practice around constructions of masculinity, privilege, and power that influenced their interactions with clients. Reflexive practice during and after the day's session highlighted the link between masculinity and domestic violence, opened space for potential new practices and intervention strategies to emerge, and pointed to the need for additional professional development. Following the professional development training, CPS workers discussed practices (meeting with fathers, including fathers in the agency data base, relying less on mothers to be the sole protector of children) where the parents were reconstructed as fathers and mothers, both included in service provision and both responsible for child protection. Participants indicated that reflexive practice provided direction for intentional practice:

I was writing more about what dad said and what mom said and what the plan was and is, and that is why we can close the file. So, making sure that dad is involved to talk to, so I didn't let that go anymore. And making sure I had a face to face with them, and then making sure I had a conversation about um, how he was raised and his family.

Taking the step to have meetings with fathers meant that CPS workers were gathering more and different in-

formation about the family and about child protection. This information was being recorded digitally within the agency data base, supporting the notion that both parents are responsible for child protection. Service plans included fathers' role and responsibilities. Mothers were not identified as the only parent in the agency file with sole responsibility for child protection because fathers were included in discussions about their responsibility for child protection. While reflecting on their (lack of) practice with men CPS workers developed new constructions in child welfare practices, as presented in the following sub-theme.

4.3.1. Reflexive Practice Supports New Constructions in Child Welfare Practices

Participants suggested in the interviews and focus group that professional development helped them be more reflective about language and also shifted their language. This occurred for them in their daily practice interacting with colleagues and service users, and how they reported and documented in the agency files. Here the participant revealed their understanding of dangerous practices that left mothers solely accountable for the protection of children, and how their increasing reflexiveness resulted in changing practices: "I am not writing those statements anymore, 'mom is protecting'. Like, I am not doing that anymore".

Here, mothers were reconstructed as not solely responsible for child protection, and the agency file was rewritten with a different construction of mothers. CPS workers described one way in which reflexive practice assisted in their daily practice providing support to their peers during team meetings:

[During part of the training] she changed the wording because it sounds a little bit like victim blaming. And I know that my co-worker was emotionally charged about that particular instance, and so she was kind of mad at that victim and I think that happens, so holding each other accountable.

5. Discussion

The findings from this study begin to fill the gap in our understanding of the ways in which CPS workers interact with mothers and fathers in situations of domestic violence and challenges the existing welfare rhetoric of inclusionary practices in domestic violence (both parents have access rights to their children). The study findings also highlight the ways the existing child welfare practices can reinforce harmful practices of control. Participants suggest that men have historically been excluded from the role of responsible parent, by CPS workers under-involving him in the plan to protect his children, and by eliminating his role as protector in the agency file. In this way, participants indicate that violent men have not been held accountable as responsible parents.

Instead full expectations and responsibilities have been placed on mothers for children's safety. These findings are consistent with recent studies involving parents that reveal mothers are held to a higher standard than are fathers (Boyd, 2017; Hughes et al., 2015) and fathers are under-involved in child protection (Alaggia et al., 2015). The findings are now also clear from the perspective of CPS workers.

Luther (2015, p. 16) argues that one of the historical purposes of child welfare legislation has been to address "the problem of intervening in families of poverty". Further the author states that throughout the history of child welfare, many professionals (medical, legal) have had influence over what constitutes harm to children, developing constructions of mothers and children types that are then used to identify who requires intervention; reinforcing relations of power for marginalized families (Luther, 2015). The application of concepts such as deservedness, harm and best interest evaluations on poor families within a neoliberal environment invite a "mother" focus for intervention given the presumed social obligation of child caregiver (Luther, 2015). Indeed, in her dissertation, the author poses for consideration the ways in which our Canadian dual legal system (those with means, those without means) is reinforced by our child welfare policies when considering rights and duties. For example, we support fathers' (those with means) rights to mother and child access, yet we do not enforce their duty to be a protective parent. Similarly, we do not support mothers' and children's (those without) rights to safety, and we expect mothers to solely fulfill her duty as a protective parent.

Our study suggests that current child protection practices reflect tensions between provincial child custody legislation (both parents gain custody and access) and child protection policies (skewed toward mother accountability) in situations of domestic violence. Highlighted in participant quotes (theme one) participants illustrate awareness of their current practices, including the way child protection practice standards generally support provincial child custody legislation (Family Law Act, 2003) where both parents gain regular and meaningful contact with children, while in daily child welfare practice only the mother is held responsible for her children's safety. Participant statements suggest a new awareness about the ways their practices, holding mothers accountable while granting fathers access to the children, place mothers and children at greater risk of harm. The implied message to the mother is that the system will support her if she follows through on certain terms and conditions (e.g., getting a restraining order), while the father holds no commensurate expectation or accountability for protecting his child from harm (Snyder & Babins-Wagner, 2012). The professional development appears to have increased CPS worker awareness of the complexities inherent in shared parenting specific to situations of domestic violence. For example, theme two reveals increased awareness of the need for domestic violence training,

while theme one illuminates gender expectations that can leave mothers and children at risk of harm. Further, participant responses highlight current limited domestic violence professional development for CPS workers, a lack of awareness about how best to change this dynamic and, a gap in knowledge of how to better engage fathers in the child protection process.

Baum (2015) suggests that utilizing a gender lens in situations of domestic violence supports CPS workers to recognize power relations, mutual fear, and communication differences that exist in CPS worker/father relationships, sub-themes arising in this study. For example, participants suggest a shift in understanding away from the current focus on mothers as sole protectors of children to a greater focus on the father's responsibility for child safety and even the responsibility of CPS workers to support children's safety. Three examples are provided in the study data: 1) reflecting on gender norm expectations in theme two; 2) identifying power relations and mutual fear in theme one; and 3) reflective and intentional practice in theme three. While within a patriarchal society, socially men hold more power than women, within the CPS worker-father relationship, some believe that fathers may think that the typically female CPS worker holds power over him and poses a threat to the integrity of his family unit (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2017). Others argue the father may feel threatened or vulnerable disclosing potential feelings of inadequacy as a parent, leaving him to act aggressively towards the worker (Baum, 2015; Scourfield et al., 2015). In turn, the worker may fear interaction with him; a fear that may increase should there be a shift in practice toward engaging fathers who have used violence with their partners. Some authors suggest that the fear dynamic may create a difficult work environment for establishing trust between service provider and service user in situations of domestic violence when engaging men in CPS work (Baum, 2015; Scourfield et al., 2015).

Engaging men in CPS practices in situations of domestic violence is not common according to participants in this study, yet the professional development training supported CPS worker reflexive practice, suggesting a greater engagement of father in child protection and documentation of fathers in agency files. Some participants indicate that fear is at least part of the reason why engagement of fathers is not pursued. The fears reported by participants in this study about working with men who have been violent with their partner are real. Safety planning for CPS workers may be necessary when practices shift to include further engagement of men who have been violent with their partner. CPS workers will need an opportunity to discuss their fears and create plans of engagement. These might include worker safety such as meetings in public spaces or at the CPS office, and the inclusion of a support person such as a colleague in meetings (BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2017).

In theme two, participants note a shift in perspective on gender roles and expectations; a shift on a

professional and personal level. This shift has caused them to critically evaluate their practices of working with mothers. These practices are reflected in the research literature suggestive of a gender bias in CPS practices (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002). Participants' deeper awareness highlights how reflexive practice can help CPS consider the implications of their daily work, and reconsider alternate ways for inclusive practice. For example, participants note that they have begun to question what including fathers in child protection means. Their thinking about who is responsible for ensuring the safety of children has evolved away from an exclusive focus on mothers as the responsible parent. A deeper gender analysis of the CPS worker-service user relationship can further our understanding of this dynamic.

Participant responses suggest strategies that CPS workers can use in their day-to-day practice to shift the culture towards engaging fathers in child protection. Some of the emerging strategies under theme three included: holding each other accountable, being more mindful of power and language, and incorporating reflexive practices around engaging or not engaging men.

6. Limitations

The study findings reflect the views of a limited number of CPS workers from one organization in Alberta, Canada, and cannot be assumed to represent the experiences of all CPS workers. Additionally, given the qualitative nature of the study, the findings are not generalizable. Participants self-selected to be part of the study and may have a greater interest in this topic than other CPS workers within their organization. This study focuses exclusively on domestic violence in heterosexual relationships from a binary understanding of gender; it does not address domestic violence situations involving same sex or nontraditional relationships.

7. Implications

The 2008 Canadian Child Incident Study found that the single greatest risk factor for child maltreatment was poverty, that many families who come into contact with CPS workers are poor, and that the number one safety risk factor for the primary caregiver is domestic violence. Together, these findings suggest a really important message for our child welfare policies and practices about the types of services that these families require. Instead of the traditional services offered by CPS workers to families, such as parenting education, the focus needs to shift towards equipping women and children who have experienced violence, with critical supports to address their poverty-related challenges (Luther, 2015). Currently, the child welfare system operates with risk assessments and utilizes coercive interventions (removal of children from parent) to legitimize marginalized women who do not fit into social norms, centering practices on what CPS workers identify as mother deficits (Luther, 2015).

Participants in this study say that CPS workers would benefit from training designed to highlight gender roles and expectations in situations of domestic violence. Such training may support the workers in their difficult day-to-day decisions about who to engage in the protection of children, and in reconstructing parents' roles and responsibilities for the safety and protection of children. Fineman's (1999) work suggests that child welfare policies need to move away from a system of coercive state intervention so that women and children can be supported through a collective responsibility. This would mean that people beyond mothers, such as CPS workers, fathers, and government, would hold responsibility for child and mother safety and well-being in situations of domestic violence. The findings from this study suggest that the CPS workers who participated in the professional development training have developed greater awareness about the implications of current practices that hold mothers solely responsible for child safety; participants show signs of shifting their perspective through reflexive practice. Indeed, the professional development training supported workers to reconstruct their understanding of service users and of child welfare practices. Fineman (1999) tells us that in order to shift our view of mothers as a risk to their children, we need a more realistic understanding of the associated challenges in situations of domestic violence such as poverty. Gaining an understanding of domestic violence and its link to masculinity is an important step in supporting CPS workers in their day-to-day work with families to keep mothers and children safe. Inviting fathers into the conversation about their role and responsibility is to reconstruct them as parent with obligations for the protection of their children. For CPS workers it means arranging meetings in safe spaces such as the office or other public space when safety is a concern. CPS workers will need to document roles and responsibilities of fathers, mothers and CPS workers in service plans and agency data bases, reconstructing our understanding of what it means to protect children.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

"How Do We Put Him in the System?": Client Construction at a Sport-Based Migrant Settlement Service in Melbourne, Australia

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Abstract

The empirical focus of this article is a sport-based settlement service targeting newly arrived migrants in Melbourne, Australia. This five-month study examines staff members' everyday work routines with a focus on their participation in meetings and the production of documents. Embedded in the Australian immigration policy context, this article shows how staff members aim to empower clients while simultaneously falling back into stigmatising refugee/client identification through administrative practices. The results indicate that staffs' everyday client constructions reinforce the othering and categorisation of ethnic minorities and support a reductionist deficit model of presenting clients. This may limit the opportunities for migrants to identify with and participate in wider Australian society and thus has the opposite effect of what governments and the sector aim to accomplish.

Issue

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, sports have been given attention in social public policy as a setting where refugees and asylum seekers experience a sense of social inclusion and belonging (Coalter, 2007; Olliff, 2008; Spaaij & Broerse, 2018). Policymakers, advocacy groups, and community-based organisations promote and invest in sport as a tool for the settlement of young people with refugee backgrounds (Jeanes, O'Connor, & Alfrey, 2015; Refugee Council Australia, 2010). In Australia, the management of cultural diversity and migrant integration is on the agenda from national ministries to local municipalities and from schools to sports clubs which points to the importance of understanding how migrant integration is 'done' by grassroots (public) institutions.

In an attempt to better understand these processes on an institutional level, this article follows Schneider and Ingram's (1993) approach of researching policy design. The policy design process is often a contested and creative process that involves selecting the target group population and other elements. Designs are embedded in social constructions, images, and symbols that send messages not only to the target population, but also to the broader public of who needs what and how benefits and burdens are distributed (Schneider & Ingram, 1993). This study focuses on a sport-based settlement service in Melbourne, Australia, and describes how staff members socially construct their clients with a focus on staff meetings and the production of documents. These bureaucratic practices can have a profound impact on client categories; the way sports programs are designed and implemented carry, implicitly or explicitly, notions of problem and solution definitions and (negative) constructions of client populations. These practices are situated in a dialectic context with top-down expectations formulated in discourses, laws and rules, and space for staff to respond bottom-up to manoeuvre regarding the concrete management of situations and individuals (Fassin, 2015). This article describes the constant struggle staff find

themselves in: breaking free from a staff-client relation and empowering clients while being pulled back into a stigmatising refugee or client identity.

The service offers various sports and non-sports programs for newly arrived migrants and aims to contribute to migrants' linguistic and cultural literacy. The service provides various sports programs ranging from one-day to six-week periods. Non-sports programs include healthy living programs, employment courses, and empowerment programs. The client population consists of so-called migrants of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and are referred to by staff as "clients", "(sport/program) participants" or "students". The terms are used interchangeably; I will refer to clients in this article for consistency. Clients have navigated divergent migration pathways; some left their home countries in a state of war and entered Australia on a refugee or other humanitarian visa whereas others followed family members or seek better education or employment opportunities. The service runs approximately ten different programs, some of which are offered multiple times per year and each attracts about thirty clients. The service mainly depends on a three-year grant by the Australian Department of Social Services in collaboration with English language schools to reach its clients. After three years, the provider will compete with other settlement services in Melbourne to secure another funding cycle. Along with the funding cycle, the department has a set of requirements that need to be addressed. Three examples include: clients must not have spent more than five years in Australia; the programs should reach a minimum number of participants; and statistics of participants (e.g., demographics, length of stay in Australia, visa category) are to be collected and reported.

Based on a five-month qualitative study, I demonstrate that staff members' practices and client constructions follow a reductionist deficit mode of reasoning. A deficit mode of reasoning portrays people as being needy victims, under-educated and culturally "different" (Coakley, 2011). A focus on clients' ethnic background and visa category reinforces an us/them binary between 'established' and 'newcomers'. I argue that this may limit the discursive opportunities for identification and participation of migrants in wider society, and thus may have the opposite effect from what governments and the sport-for-development sector aim to accomplish (cf. Robertson, 2018; Roggeband & Verloo, 2007).

This article is structured as follows: I first discuss the immigration and integration debates in Australia, followed by the perceived role of sport-for-development in integrating and supporting newly arrived migrants. The next section describes the methodology of the study. I then discuss the theoretical framework and finally present the ethnographic data.

2. Managing Difference: The Australian Context

The political arena of most Western nation-states is currently concerned with increasing migratory pressures and have created complex systems of civic stratification (Kofman, 2005). Societies that have been receiving high numbers of migrants and asylum seekers have increasingly developed complex migratory regimes resulting in many migrant and visa categories. This section briefly discusses how migrant integration and ethnic difference is managed in Australia.

An important aspect in understanding the migration rhetoric is looking at multiculturalism debates. Australia embraced multiculturalism in the 1970s as a project of national identity renewal. Many state and local governments promote the virtues of multiculturalism to give recognition to the growing importance of religious and ethnic diversity (Bouma, 2006). In this narrative, social inclusion of newly arrived migrants can be achieved through multiculturalist policies that harness Australia as a country of many ethnicities and cultures (Moran, 2011). Young (2000) describes social inclusion, while highlighting its assimilationist character, as making social and economic deviants fit into dominant norms and institutions and providing them with equal education and welfare opportunities.

The demographic diversity has also caused anxiety about social cohesion and the maintenance of Anglo-cultural hegemony. Post-second world war, the notorious White Australia policy weakened but was soon followed by new expressions of opposition to diversity and multiculturalism including the Blainey Debate in the 1980s (Markus, 2014) and the rise and fall of the right-wing One Nation party in the 1990s and its resurgence in the 2016 federal election. Migrant settlement and integration in this context are framed as policy issues concerned with maintaining 'Anglo culture' and assimilating newcomers into the existing social, cultural, and political system. Australia's current humanitarian program focuses on temporary protection, place-based resettlement, and refugees' economic contribution (Boese, van Kooy, & Bowman, 2018). Immigration policies encourage refugee settlement in regional and rural areas with skills shortages, instead of congested urban areas such as Melbourne and Sydney.

The migration discussion is further characterised by the disproportionate public anxiety asylum seekers provoke that other migrant categories (such as students and skilled workers) do not raise. This anxiety is strengthened through linking this migrant group to perceived illegal status with religious and racial categorisation in the context of Islamophobia (Klocker & Dunn, 2003). Australian diversity politics and policy are further underpinned by an essentialist groupism approach, categorising minority groups on the basis of country of birth or ethnic, linguistic, or religious background (Anthias, 2012). For example, the Australian Census measures self-reported ethnic, religious, and language background. The social service and social policy sectors often employ the categories "non-English speaking" and "culturally and linguistically diverse" to describe target populations and to refer to non-Indigenous ethnic groups other than the

English-speaking Anglo-Saxon majority. A growing body of research, however, shows ethnic and cultural identities are becoming increasingly complex and hybrid due to the diversification of migration patterns, inter-marriage, and generational changes (Harris, 2009).

In Australia, visa categories are as complex and varied as people's migration trajectories. Similar to the "non-English speaking" and "culturally and linguistically diverse" categories, Australian sociologists have been slow in critically analysing taken-for-granted migrant classifications, even though the migration and super-diversity complexity is rapidly emerging in Australia (Robertson, 2018). A critical analysis is important because the manner in which migrant categories are constructed "can work to diminish their capacity and divide and exclude" (Robertson, 2018, p. 4).

Sport-for-development initiatives operate in and are part of this system. They are a product of a time in which high pressure is placed on creating a national identity, maintaining Anglo-cultural hegemony and preparing newcomers to be functional citizens. In the next section, I will discuss the role of sport-for-development in managing difference and as an integration policy tool.

3. Migrant Settlement through Sport-for-Development Initiatives

Sport is often perceived as a suitable policy tool to battle social problems, such as managing cultural differences in the context of immigration (Coalter, 2007). Olliff (2008) notes that since the 2000s, numerous government sport-for-development initiatives have been established in Australia, as part of a global movement, focussing on sports and recreational programs. The relation between sport and social outcomes has been thoroughly scrutinised and is often found to be uncritically determined (see, e.g., Houlihan, Bloyce, & Smith, 2009). However, when implemented under the right conditions, sport can achieve a range of welfare objectives concerned with the settlement of newcomers (Coalter, 2010; McDonald, Spaaij, & Dukic, 2018).

The use of sport as a means for integration is strengthened and justified by the way sport is continuously described as part of the Australian national identity. Rowe (2017) refers to *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond*, which contains the required study content for the Australian citizenship test, to describe the institutional value sport has in Australian culture. The section on sport and recreation, for example, states that "many Australians love sport and many have achieved impressive results at an international level", and that "throughout history, sport has both characterised the Australian people and united us" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014, p. 43). Rowe (2017, p. 1473) concludes that such a "state-initiated endorsement of sport means that there is a clear association between sport and 'Australianness' and a general expectation that embracing sport is part of becoming an Australian".

Sport is not only considered to be essential to the Australian identity, but also as a site for "active citizenship" (Spaaij, 2013) and as a "breeding ground" for future national representatives (McDonald, 2016). Both Spaaij (2013) and McDonald (2016) demonstrate how these sport sites are products of neoliberal governing characterised by limited state involvement, individualism, and the promotion of market solutions (Walsh, 2014). Coakley (2011) further critically describes how neoliberalism shapes the sport-for-development industry. Social problems are individualised within sport-for-development programs focusing on "personal growth that is based on planned skill development combined with pep talks emphasising internal reflection, endless possibilities, [and] 'being all they can be'" (Coakley, 2011, p. 78). Moreover, sport-for-development programs are often organised around a deficit reduction model with people being portrayed as needy victims of drought, civil war, and general social disorganisation and are presented as under- or non-educated and culturally 'different'. Sport-for-development initiatives are currently a product of, and reinforce, a neoliberal agenda in which ethnic minorities are othered from the mainstream and need to be governed and be made to "reach the inside" of society (Ekholm & Dahlstedt, 2017; McDonald, Rodriguez, & George, 2018).

4. Theory

Whereas the previous section described the potentials of and critiques on sport-for-development initiatives, the question remains regarding how the programs relate to policy design, how they are implemented and thereby really 'produced' (cf. Fassin, 2015). This article draws on two bodies of literature: the first one, Schneider and Ingram (1997), provides lenses to understand the discursive power of policies and client construction; the second describes the role of local institutions in the formation and implementation of policies.

4.1. Policy Design and Client Construction

Policies are often formed to respond to perceived social problems (Stone, 2011). In this process, troubles are formulated and turned into problems to make them manageable and while these problems have objective qualities, they are also subjectively defined (Gubrium, Andreassen, & Solvang, 2016). Schneider and Ingram have contributed extensively, both collaboratively and independently, to a critical understanding of policy design over nearly three decades. The theory posits "that the social construction of a social group interacts with the political power of the group to produce distinctive patterns of policy design that impact the lives, identity, and perceptions of that group" (Schneider & Ingram, 2017, p. 320).

Schneider's (2012) discussion of two different policy design traditions, as a noun and as a verb, is instructive. Policy design (as a noun) refers to the policy

content and to a systematic effort to achieve efficient policy outcomes. This tradition is described as "policy-centric" and involves a normative and empirical perspective (Mettler & Soss, 2004). From a normative perspective, public policies in a democracy are charged with the task of promoting active and engaged citizens, promoting fairness for all, and solving collective problems effectively (Schneider, 2012). From an empirical perspective, policies are seen as a composition of elements that can be described and compared. Fundamental elements include goals or 'problems' to be solved, defining the target population, policy tools, and underlying (normative) assumptions (Schneider & Ingram, 1997).

Policy designing (as a verb) emphasises the process through which policy content is produced and recognises:

> The cognitive biases embedded in the policy as well as attributes that are damaging to the linkage between public policy and democratic principles, such as the intentionally manipulative, deceptive, illogical, mean-spirited, and unscientific factors that influenced the choice of design elements. (Schneider, 2012, p. 218)

Central in this tradition is the insight from sociology and social psychology that people have the tendency to organise the social world into 'us' and 'them' or 'the others' who are constructed in terms of dangerous, undeserving, lazy, stupid, or other undesirable traits (Schneider, 2012). Kahneman, Slovic and Tversky (1982) have shown that these biases find their way into public policy designs. In the data sections, I will demonstrate how these biases are manifested in everyday practices at the sport-settlement service which is the focus of this paper. Before doing so, the next section discusses the interplay between top-down policy production and its everyday implementation.

4.2. Public Institutions and Diversity Workers

Current social work research demonstrates the wide continuum in which policies are created, implemented and lived. While Woolgar and Neyland (2013) focus on the state and its top-down production of policies (see also McKee, 2009), others study what Lipsky (1980) famously described as "street-level bureaucrats", who give shape to the abstract state policies in their encounters with clients, and Fassin (2015), who concentrates on institutions that are situated between the state and front line policy implementation. Others have described the relationship between agents and clients (Gubrium et al., 2016) or centralised the clienthood process and the role of clients themselves in the formation and implementation of policies (Hall, 2003).

This article focuses on the institutional level. Understanding the state, one should approach it from the margins, where the state is locally produced (Thelen, Vetters, & von Benda-Beckmann, 2017). Public institutions and

their agents are positioned "between the macro-power of the law and policy makers and the micro-powers of the agents in the institutions" (Fassin, 2015, p. 259). Thus, it is the institution's relationship to the state and to the clients through agents that inevitably poses challenges in what "is said and done in the public sphere and the political world" (Fassin, 2015, p. 256). Working in a clearly defined law and policy framework, public institutions have the freedom to produce their own documents and policies to facilitate implementation by street-level bureaucrats.

Relevant for this article is what Hagelund (2010) refers to as "diversity dilemmas". Diversity dilemmas describe the dilemmas "diversity workers" (street-level bureaucrats working with migrants and their families) encounter and the strategies they employ when encountering ambivalent situations in which, on the one hand, they are concerned with clients' success in the welfare state institutions (e.g., learning the language and excelling at school) and, on the other hand, want to respect clients' privacy and their right to practice culturally diverse lifestyles (Hagelund, 2010). Diversity dilemmas are inherently linked to the two different agendas in the integration projects discussed by Grillo (2002). One agenda is concerned with incorporating newcomers into society on equal terms, whereas the other agenda is concerned with accommodating diversity within the existing majority framework (Grillo, 2002). These two agendas potentially clash, often leading to conflict between diversity workers (or diversity bureaucrats) and their clients during their encounters.

5. Methods

This research was part of a broader program evaluation which included document analysis, observations, a focus group with staff members, and interviews with clients of various programs and partners such as sports organisations, English language schools, and community centres. This article draws on the first three methods with a particular focus on staff meetings and the production of documents. The evaluation project enabled access to and insights into staff work processes and institutional discourses (DeVault, 2006). In other words, the setting (case study) came first and the study topic arose from the nature of this setting (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Over a period of five months, I spent three to four days per week with staff members in or outside the office and performed light assistance tasks related to program delivery or at community events.

At the time of writing, the programs are run by six core staff members (or "diversity workers", which will be used interchangeably; cf. Hagelund, 2010), of which three are in management and three in delivering. Students in placement and volunteers supported all six staff members. Although the volunteer pool consisted of over twenty volunteers, only four highly involved volunteers (the ones who attended staff meetings and vol-

unteered multiple times per week and in multiple programs) were included in this research. Student placements generally took place over the course of four to six months. Whereas all staff members were in contact with clients, delivering staff spent most of their time outside the office running the programs, maintaining everyday contacts with clients and representatives of the collaborating schools or community organisations. Time spent inside the office was dedicated to preparing programs, process consent forms or evaluations, and attending staff meetings. The three delivering staff members, or 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 1980), are the main contact between clients and schools and the managing staff members. Managing staff maintained and established new contacts with program partners, facilitated work conditions for delivering staff, oversaw long-term program development, and their work included grant proposal writing. Five staff members are first-generation migrants and often drew on their migratory experiences in their contact with clients. Students and volunteers were mostly born in Australia. The staff strongly believed this enabled them to 'stand in their shoes' and provide the support clients need. Some staff has a sport management background, whereas others have a settlement employment background. Students follow a bachelor's in social work, community phycology, or related fields.

Due to the dynamic nature of diversity workers' schedules, observations took place inside and outside the office. In the office, I focussed on staff meetings, informal conversations among staff, and staff preparing or processing program delivery. Observations outside the office mainly involved the interaction between staff members and clients and partner representatives, the delivery of the program, and community events. After a day in the office, a meeting, or an outdoor activity, detailed field-notes were kept in a journal. Notes on conversations between staff members and/or clients and staff meeting summaries were included in the journal. When I followed staff members in program delivery, I would perform basic assistance tasks and always (both in and outside the office) assumed the role of researcher and was introduced as such to partners and clients.

Additionally, I conducted a two-hour focus group with four staff members and two volunteers. The leading questions in the focus group included how staff members describe their clients, how they perceive participants' needs, what kind of contributions staff could personally offer to clients' settlement, and the kind of (diversity) challenges they encounter. Also, how funding requirements relate to the need of clients and strategies staff members employ to meet the requirements and also respond to participants needs was included in the focus group. The focus group was held three months into data collection and discussion topics were informed by previous observations, topics discussed in staff meetings, and informal conversations with clients, staff, and program partners. The focus group provided the opportunity to ask for clarification on particular topics (such as the use of consent and evaluation forms and the workload of program deliverers), but also enabled staff to reflect on their work practices and to discuss challenges in a way the routinised staff meetings cannot.

Several ethical considerations influenced the research. The culturally diverse environment in which the research was undertaken required a particular ethical awareness and sensitivity. As a Dutch migrant, white, and an educated woman of feminist upbringing (including the belief in gender equity, independence, and the importance of voicing one's own opinion), I tried to find a balance between respecting clients' own values and encouraging clients to be honest in interviews when asking about their program experiences (as a researcher) and to make their own decisions (as a delivery assistant). In finding this balance I followed ethical standards set by diversity workers such as foregrounding clients' decision-power and asking for support of a language school teacher or a client's friend for, e.g., interpretation help in the case of language difficulty. Teachers or friends were experienced in communicating with a particular client and were helpful in establishing confidence.

My role as researcher and assistant in program delivery resulted at times in ambivalent moments that required additional ethical considerations beside the standard ethical practices. In the weekly staff meetings, I was often given time to explain how I experienced the program delivery, what I thought could be improved, and what my 'success moment' of the week was from a staff member, rather than a researcher, perspective. The 'hat' I was wearing could change a few times within one setting, for example, a staff meeting. This flexibility enabled me to connect in different ways with staff members, clients, and others in the field. It also required constant reflexivity, whether I was in a critical researcher role or in a supportive assistance role. Ethics approval was obtained by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee and pseudonyms were allocated to protect respondents' privacy.

The focus group was electronically recorded and, together with the journal and internal documents, transcribed using the NVivo software program. All data, including those collected for this article and the evaluation project, were initially analysed using a thematic analysis approach. A second thematic analysis for this article focussed on the above-described methods. The second analysis was informed by Schneider and Ingram's theorisation of policy design that places an emphasis on how clients, problems and solutions are socially constructed in combination with the fact that technologies of control are increasingly textual and discursive (Smith, 2005). The latter analysis resulted in codes (e.g., Australian cultural ideal, migrant history, staff motivation) that were consequently organised in subthemes (e.g., staff coping strategies, settlement needs, and organisation hierarchies) and finally in the two themes discussed in the next section.

6. "How Do We Put Him in the System?": A Sport-Based Settlement Service in Melbourne West

The question posed in a staff meeting, "how do we put him in the system?", reflects the broader concern of diversity workers and how they can cater to their clients best, and it illustrates the creativity of diversity workers when dealing with everyday challenges. The ethnographic data is presented in two sections based on the main themes. Whereas the first theme describes staff concerns and strategies related to reaching the right clients and providing the right settlement services within the organisation structure, the second theme presents data on how this empowerment is restricted. Overall, the two sections describe the constant struggle diversity workers find themselves in: breaking free from a staff-client power relation and empowering clients while being pulled back into a stigmatising approach to client construction.

6.1. Eligible Clients and Program Design

Eligible clients of the sport-settlement service include migrants who have arrived in Australia as humanitarian entrants or through the family member visa program in the last five years. The service collaborates with language schools to access most of their clients. The language schools run the Adult Migrant English Program which is overseen by the Australian Government, Department of Education and Training. The 510 English language tuition hours provided through the program support migrants from a non-English background after their arrival in Australia to start learning English or build on existing language skills. However, settlement needs vary largely across clients and, notably, continue to exist after completing the 510 hours or after having spent five years in Australia. The definition of eligible clients that fall under the Department of Social Services funding, in combination with how the service accesses its clients, places restrictions on migrants who are eligible for the sport-settlement service. The narrow categorisation of eligible clients is described as highly problematic by most staff members. Hamia (staff member, female, 30s) describes how, as a consequence, the program design does not necessarily address clients' needs or reach the right clients:

> The government's focus for the next three years is employment, which is not a client's priority in the first few months after arrival. And it really shouldn't be because they've got heaps to deal with, there's the trauma, language. If we prioritise employment more, it will change the way the program looks like.

In a similar vein, Linda (staff member, female, 20s) discussed with her colleagues in a staff meeting a client who has participated in their programs for two years and wants to continue to do so but is not eligible anymore as he has spent more than five years in Australia. It is, however, beneficial for the service to continue to support him considering his leadership role in the local South-Sudanese community and can motivate his peers to participate in the settlement programs. The staff agreed that he should be part of one of the programs, upon which Linda asked: "How do we put him in the system?" In a practical sense, the system refers to a computer program in which clients' data is administrated. Consent forms filled out by clients form the basis for this digital collection and are discussed in depth in the following section. On a more abstract level, the system refers to a process that dictates who is included and who is excluded. In other words, does a client 'tick' the eligibility boxes? The staff was confronted with a dilemma: how can this man participate in a program without having to be registered? To continue supporting and to maintain the relationship with this particular client, but not having to register the client in the computer system, the staff members concluded that the volunteer program was the best option. The volunteer program was established a few years ago and is open for anyone, (former) clients and non-clients alike, to join and in this program volunteers assist core staff members in delivering or preparing programs. This example demonstrates a strategy which staff members have developed to cope with a bureaucratic challenge that is a result of being situated between government guidelines and clients' (and the settlement service's) needs (cf. Fassin, 2015). This example not only demonstrates how coping strategies include clients, but can also simultaneously have exclusive characteristics. Since the client offered the organisation additional value (direct contact with the South-Sudanese community), he was encouraged to participate in the volunteer program in a way other clients in a similar situation, but without additional value, might not have.

The deviation between needs and requirements is recognised by many other settlement services. To be able to cater to non-eligible clients, these services seek funding elsewhere and design additional programs. Naturally, this coping strategy increases the workload of staff in an already competitive neoliberal 'more-for-less' settlement service sector. As a response to the imbalance, Amar (staff member, male, 30s) emphasised the importance of community-needs:

> We are looking at a problem in society and trying to provide for that, solve that issue. Our service probably needs to be more responsive to what is needed within the community and try to address that, as opposed to continuing to deliver program after program.

Although it remains unclear throughout the interview what exactly Amar means by "problems in society", they will not be solved when depending solely on funding bodies' requirements. Amar is the highest placed manager and his rather abstract formulation of the organisation's aim, "looking for a problem in society" and "being re-

sponsive to what is needed" is in sharp contrast with the more hands-on approach by the other two managers and delivering staff. During my ethnographic research, developments such as described by Amar were communicated to the delivering staff by the other two managing staff members, direct communication was scarce. In staff meetings, attending staff (and at times students in placement) discussed strategies regarding how they could be more responsive to individual and community settlement needs. In an effort to engage more with clients and include them in the program design, staff organised formal community meetings and one-on-one informal conversations. Despite the staff's genuine intention to include and empower clients, it proved to be a difficult task to get out of the staff-client relation.

The objective of the service is to contribute to migrants' Australian linguistic and cultural literacy but simultaneously recognise and respect cultural and religious background. Diversity workers consciously made an effort to learn about clients' cultural traditions and in conversations wanted to learn about words/phrases in clients' native languages. Staff would be made sure to provide Halal meat at barbeques and were aware of Islamic and other feast days to plan programs accordingly. However, staff also encountered "diversity dilemmas" (Hagelund, 2010) which are clearly illustrated by the discussion of whether sports activities should be sex-separated or mixed. Female clients often expressed a preference for separated sports teams as these clients had less experience with sports and played less 'harshly' than male clients. On the other hand, gender-mixed teams, and when taken further: gender-neutral treatment and women empowerment are central Australian ideals newcomers are expected to align with. Solutions to this cannot be found in policy documents but were discussed in staff meetings and often staff prioritised clients' preferences (and to ensure female participation) and gender norms could be discussed at another time and another place—a similar conclusion can be found in Hagelund (2010) when the author discusses mixed youth swimming classes.

6.2. Starting Over, Becoming the Same?

Consent and evaluation forms are central bureaucratic practices through which staff generates paperwork. The two forms are policy requirements and provide remarkable insight into how top-down policies and bottom-up implementation interact. Prior to any program, sport or non-sport, clients are asked by delivering staff to fill out a consent form upon which they agree to take responsibility for any incidents. The consent form also includes social demographic questions (e.g., age and sex) as well as the following: "which language do you speak at home?", "how much time have you spent in Australia?", "on which visa did you enter Australia?" The answers are used anonymously, for internal use as well as to report to funding bodies. Evaluation forms are used similarly

to report and update funding bodies and other program partners about the successes and impact of the settlement programs.

The forms were a source for staff discussions and concern. Clients with low English skills were generally unable to interpret and respond to questions, responses were not always clear, and the results of the consent and evaluation forms were shallow and questionable (e.g., are clients in the position to be critical and honest?). To illustrate this, I will describe two observations. One day, when I was assisting Bilal (staff member, male, 20s) with distributing and collecting evaluation forms, I experienced the following:

> Bilal and I distributed the forms to the seven students in the classroom. The teacher had just left to get coffee. Some students translated questions with their phones, another student asked me to assist her. I formulated the questions in different ways with help from another student but remained unsuccessful with some questions. She gave the pencil to me and looked at the form, asking me to complete it. When I returned the pencil, she refused, and I realised she couldn't (or was not confident to) write in English. We left some of the questions unanswered. She seemed disappointed with the situation, not being able to answer the questions. (entry from a personal journal, 25 August 2018)

My experience represents what diversity workers face on a daily basis: how to return to the office with the data and simultaneously maintaining a confidential relationship that is based on trust and understanding instead of disappointment and disempowered clients. A second example is concerned with consent forms at an employment course. Fiona asked clients to fill out a consent form; most were able to answer the questions. One client received help from the teacher. When clients came across the question "on what visa did you enter Australia?" they started whispering, unsure how to respond. Fiona intervened and explained it asked for the Humanitarian visa subclass they had been granted. The situation caused confusion because some could not remember the exact subclass or seemed hesitant to write it down. Fiona explained to the women sitting next to me that it was probably 202 or 204 (respectively, subclass Global Special Humanitarian and Women at Risk under the Humanitarian Program).

The language and ethical challenges were recognised by managing staff, but the deliverers and students in placement took initiative to change the forms to make their work less awkward and establish or maintain a confidential relationship, which is vital in social work. Teachers played a central role in another strategy diversity workers drew on. As the forms were completed in the classroom, language teachers were often asked to help to interpret the questions. Some proactive teachers saw these moments as an opportunity to teach their students about reading and filling out bureaucratic forms. Other

times it was up to the staff member to make the best of the situation.

Migration-related questions might seem like unequivocal questions that for most participants are, or have become, just as straightforward as their name and email address. However, apart from the practical challenges the forms provide, they also place emphasis on where clients originally come from, that they are not originally from Australia, and potentially enforce the us/them relationship (cf. Schneider, 2012): 'us', staff members who are well acquainted with the English language and Australian culture, teaching 'them', clients, what is expected from new citizens. Although staff members acknowledge they can learn from clients in terms of cultural traditions, clients are mostly described in terms of students and the ones in a learning process. A quote from Fiona highlights this:

Some [clients] say: 'I'm a doctor, I'm a technician'. I had completely forgotten that these people actually have lives, how condescending of me to not think that was the case. These people had skills, they just [had acquired these] in another country. So that was my lesson of the day and I now ask it all the time.

Fiona's reflection on her thinking narrates how migrants' backgrounds are perceived. Although Fiona explains she has become aware of it and now asks new clients about their education and employment background "all the time", this is generally not the case in broader Australian society. Workplace discrimination and migrants' pre-migration education and employment experiences continue to be under-valued or not recognised at all (Moran, 2011). Although not confirmed by staff members, condescending behaviour (the attitude of patronising superiority), and seeing clients as objects of learning or 'blank canvases' may be reinforced by clients being continuously referred to as "students" of the English language schools.

Hage (2000, pp. 50–51) critically reflects on citizenship papers in the Australian context and writes:

The very possession of these citizenship papers is stigmatising at a practical, non-official level since their possession and production is only required from those who have not acquired their citizenship by birth. Thus, what is the proof of belonging to the state (citizenship) can, in a practical sense, operate as a proof of national non-belonging to the dominant culture.

Citizenship papers acknowledge newly arrived migrants as legal residents of the national territory. However, and similar to the consent forms, the papers do not guarantee non-official acceptance and rather operates as proof of non-belonging, Hage (2000) argues. Categories such as "culturally and linguistically diverse migrants" and "refugees" operate in a similar stigmatising vein. Clients of the settlement service have all continued their lives

in a new country and started over after having to (forcefully) leave their countries of birth. The data goes to question whether clients are really starting over or are 'stuck' in a refugee/student/culturally and linguistically diverse-migrant category that is emphasised in forms and documents.

7. Conclusions and Discussion

Building on Schneider and Ingram's (1993) approach to researching policy design and the construction of societal problems, solutions, and target populations, this article has sought to better understand these practices on the public institutional level. A growing body of literature has provided critical voices and has contributed to the development of the sport-for-development field. Nonetheless, substantial research focussing on policy design and implementation is still lacking.

This article draws on five-month qualitative research prioritising staff's everyday work processes with a focus on staff meetings and the production of documents (cf. DeVault, 2006). At times staff meetings and documents supplemented each other while at other times the two work processes were in conflict. Strategies not offered in official policy documents were discussed in staff meetings to share best practices and ensure consistency among staff members (e.g., organising sex-separated sports settings). In this sense, meetings and documents complement each other. On the other hand, meetings were also used to discuss strategies to avoid the use of documents and 'the official system' to be able to cater as many clients as possible (e.g., including a non-eligible client in the volunteer program to avoid having to register him in the system). Other coping strategies were discussed in this article, including the adjustment of forms and seeking alternative financial sources to offer clients the most suitable and ethically sensitive support. These findings are consistent with Devlieghere (2017), who examines the interaction between Electronic Information Systems and social workers in the context of child welfare services and describes how social workers shape and bend regulations. In doing so, although thereby also risking the exclusion of broader social-political principles, social workers were able to be more responsive to the needs and concerns of clients and their families (Devlieghere, 2017).

In this article, I have shown how staff members' client constructions in meetings and documents reinforce othering, migrant categorisation and support a deficit, reductionist model. While clients were talked about in respectful and empowering terms in meetings or informal discussions among staff, policy documents (program designs and grant applications) and consent/evaluation forms reinforce migrant categorisation. Although the "culturally and linguistically diverse" category, prominent in all documents of the sport-based settlement service, replaced "non-English speaking" for its more inclusive assets, it too encompasses conflicting def-

initions and is heavily criticised for its othering character (Sawrikar & Katz, 2009). The fixation on collecting clients' socio-demographic data emphasises their non-Australianness and questions whether they will ever become a 'real' citizen. On a national level, it contributes to upholding Australia's essentialist national approach to citizenship.

Settlement services in Australia are situated in a migratory regime in which migrant integration is framed as a policy issue concerned with the assimilation of newcomers and the maintenance of Anglo-culture hegemony. Portes (2010, p. 1550) writes that:

> The problem, however, is not that they [newcomers] threaten the basic social and cultural order of these societies, but that they remain outside of it. Such groups do not 'remake' the mainstream, they just fail to join it for various reasons.

In line with Portes (2010), and based on the data, I argue that a deficit reductionist representation of migrants may limit the discursive opportunities for identification and participation of migrants in wider society, and thus may have the opposite effect from what governments and the sport-for-development sector aim to accomplish (cf. Roggeband & Verloo, 2007). This is consistent with Robertson's (2018) findings, which have introduced the term "status-making" in order to understand and challenge taken-for-granted migrant types and categories, as these can have a profound impact on a migrant's life.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Things Left Unwritten: Interview Accounts versus Institutional Texts in a Case of Detention Home Violence

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Abstract

To write about clients is an established routine in countless institutional settings, regardless of the fact that clients themselves seldom feel that the produced texts mirror or summarize their experiences. But what, more specifically, is left unwritten when staff starts typing on the keyboard to insert a piece of daily life into the computer? This article draws on data on violent events in Swedish detention homes, covering, on the one hand, interview accounts collected by ethnographic researchers and, on the other hand, formal journal reports on the "same" event written by staff. The analysis of one case exemplifies what written versions of a violent ward drama omit or transform: staff members' "separation work" of the fighting actors and their local manufacturing of accountability, the involved actors' conflict explanations in terms of ethnicity, gang culture, and "the first blow", young people's way of linking their self-control to the institution's privilege system, and moral emotions as well as the significance of crucial details in the depicted course of events. The argument is not that staff should merely improve their routines of documenting events to really cover these or other facets of social life that are left behind at a detention home. Rather, the article attempts to explore why and in what sense institutional writing is incompatible with more informal, personal, and local accounting procedures.

Keywords

casebook journals; detention home; ethnography; institutional texts; interview; producing clients; total institution; written records

Issue

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1. Introduction

What happens when social life is written down? Ethnographers sometimes argue that "down" is the wrong word. Things are rather written "up" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, pp. 46–65). Whereas "writing down" portrays the writer as just detecting, "writing up" connotes creativity. No matter how careful the researchers' observations are, one can hardly argue that everything is captured, or that what is captured can be depicted accurately. Instead, ethnographers engage in an inevitably partial interpretation process, where things happening in social life are reduced and transformed. Ethnographers even inscribe (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 8); they turn their notes into exemplars of this or that tendency, setting or phenomenon, not only during the subsequent analytical

work but also in the very moment of seeing, listening, and feeling. There is a compelling interpretative practice (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997) going on when things are experienced and transcribed, involving an active subject trying to make sense of a social world by accounting for a selection of its local relevancies.

Parallel processes seem to take place in practical social work, exemplified in this article with Swedish detention homes for youth. These homes are institutions providing treatment and schooling for boys and girls, mainly with a prior criminal history or drug problems, in the form of strict control of everyday life and enforced care. The official term *Särskilda ungdomshem* can be translated to "special youth homes" (Gradin Franzén, 2014, p. 13) or "special residential homes for young people".

As Enell (2017) shows, when young people end up in such homes their care begin with an assessment (in Swedish: *utredning*) and staff structure the assessing text in a particular way. The young people's dependency on social workers is stressed, as well as their vulnerability in general (Enell, 2017, p. 137). These written assessments typically transform young people's troubles into problems and produce clients (cf. Lipsky, 1980, p. 59). Individual biographies and idiosyncratic worries are packaged into recognizable social problems (e.g., addiction, ADHD, criminality) by words and phrases. Even though young people sometimes may evaluate the assessment themselves, and thereby personally get something out of it ("to know myself better", says Enell, 2017, p. 136), they may also get upset and protest against the conclusions in the texts (Enell, 2017, p. 132). Whereas the institutional writing seems to presume that individuals are being assessed in a context-free and neutral manner, young people take the very context of the assessment practice into account. In institutions, the youth experience "constant work" on how to behave and present themselves (Enell, 2017, p. 136). The assessment is conditioned by the fact that secure accommodation is the "assessment environment", as young people indicate (Enell, 2017, pp. 137–138). Staff observes and evaluates young people in a setting that is very similar to a total institution.

In a previous article, a colleague and I investigated wordings and rhetorical patterns in casebook journals in these institutions (Wästerfors & Åkerström, 2015), particularly the running notes on clients in care. The institutions are obliged to write not only assessments but also these journals in order to document information about the care. The Swedish National Board of Institutional Care (n.d.) states that they function as "support for us" to provide "good and secure care". There is a need to document what has been done in the care, the authority argues, and what staff are planning to do. Decisions need background, and staff needs to communicate with each other about their work on a daily basis.

We discovered that treatment assistants writing "up" the daily life of young people in a ward were recurrently "zooming in" on the young people's behavioral problems (rather than their resources or capabilities), they took detailed notes on their mood and mood changes (but not mentioning their own or colleagues' mood), and routinely hid troubles or circumscribed staff agency and instead focused quite exclusively on how young people choose to act. Instead of writing, for instance, that a particular staff member grabbed or lifted up a client and dragged them into the isolation room, the treatment assistants used passive tense or dim expressions so that acting staff did not get into the limelight. The clients "were lifted up", "taken to the isolation room", "put down by staff", etc.—that is, the writer used words and phrases that deflected staff agency (O'Connor, 2000, p. 42; cf. Potter, 1996, p. 158; Wästerfors & Åkerström, 2015). Thereby they indicated a uniform staff collective not really making choices or acting but simply responding—resolutely and logically—to the young people's choices and their allegedly peculiar or unusual actions. By analyzing casebook discourse, we could show that these institutions systematically depicted inmates and events in ways that reproduce internal staff loyalty and coherence.

But what we could not show was alternative and more ethnographically based images of precisely those events and associated actors that had been written up by the institution. Even though I (who had done the fieldwork) had a lot of field notes and interviews from detention homes in Sweden (Wästerfors, 2009), I had not been studying those days precisely, or events covered by the casebook notes under study. I could recognize bits and pieces and compare them with my observations and interviews, but most of the occasions in the casebook journal we studied still seemed to belong to a quite exclusive textualized world, fairly separate from what I had seen myself as a participant observer or what was uttered in my interviews. It seemed reasonable to argue that crucial aspects of actions and emotions in institutional life were left behind, but we could not specify them with regard to the described events. If, for instance, the journal depicted an event when a young boy started to argue and shout just after a telephone call with his mother, we had no other account of this event but the one written down by staff. We had notes about other everyday conflicts at the ward—including those connected to calls from the outside—but not specifically this one.

The data that this article draws on are different. Now, me and another colleague, Jesper Hambert, set out to study particular cases of a more delimited slice of social life at detention homes—violent events—and doing so with the intention to get as many versions of the "same" events as possible (as far as they had been experienced as the same by the field members). After having identified an event, for instance some guys fighting over a remote control in front of the TV at a ward (i.e., the case in this article), we tried to interview the individuals involved, the staff who came running to calm them down, the staff member who was present in the room from the beginning of the interaction, and then we also asked for the written electronic casebook notes on this very event. This made it possible to analyze not only the rhetoric of institutional texts per se but also some of the discrepancies between, on the one hand, oral and relatively spontaneous accounts of a drama in research interviews and, on the other hand, a piece of formal text about the "same" issue. Instead of comparing institutional writing with ethnographic pictures, in general, I was now able to pinpoint more exactly what staff had found relevant to "write up" in comparison to less structured, "wilder", and messier oral accounts in my data.

The "same" in "the same event" is here to be understood as an imprecise and quite practical term, as a field member's label rather than an analytical term in research. When closely analyzed, the events in the institutional texts do not seem to be the "same" as the ones orally described—they turn into something different in

the written form, much shorter, transitory, and more institutionally correct—but still, members of the institutions count them as the "same". There is an association between the lived and the textualized dramas in this context that hardly anyone questions, even though the actors differ regarding interpretations and evaluations. For instance, with the help of just a few words from my colleague, Jesper Hambert, on the event with the remote control, along with the name of the ward and the date, it was easy for staff to identify the relevant passages in their digital texts.

We had one case, though, when staff had trouble remembering what both their record and the young inmate at issue reported, a case in which a girl was isolated after an argument outside her room at night. A staff member had written a distinctly formulated document about the decision to isolate her—we found that text during our fieldwork—and the girl could also recall and describe the event, but none of the staff that participated in taking her to the isolation cell could describe what had happened when Jesper Hambert met them some months later. One staff member started to talk about another event with another girl, but when Jesper Hambert tried to remind him of some details in the drama he gave up. He could not identify it, he could not remember. He said he was sorry and that there is "a lot going on at the ward". It is like "remembering what you did during lunch a couple of months ago".

Even if this case turned into an ethnographic failure since I could not analyze any oral account from staff (only the girl's and the written note), it was nonetheless illuminating regarding how staff generally view the very type of drama the study focused on in this setting. They all revolve around everyday events, albeit violent, in institutions where "a lot" is happening. There is, in other words, a flow of similar events going on in this field, as part of the everyday reality of treating young people with criminal experiences or other psycho-social issues in closed institutions. Some things are written up and remembered (also by staff), some are not.

2. Data and Analysis

Before I go into detail regarding the case at hand, I would like to briefly refer to my data and analytic method. The entire project relies on interviews and texts regarding fifteen (15) violent events. My colleague Jesper Hambert conducted fieldwork on four cases—including the case in this article—the remaining fieldwork was carried out by me, followed by the analysis and writing. Apart from this, twenty-seven (27) other young people and staff have been interviewed on the theme "how to avoid violence", which is not particularly tied to the events at issue. In total, at least seventy-one (71) individuals have been interviewed on violence and violent events in detention homes (see Wästerfors, 2018). I also have additional interviews and field notes from previous projects in the same settings (on schooling and conflict management,

see Wästerfors, 2009, 2013, 2016) as background material. All interviews are ethnographically shaped (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 103–120). In this article, I only make use of a tiny part of this body of data, namely those related to the event with the remote control.

I have been using a kind of double exposure when analyzing this event, or what Gubrium and Holstein (1997, p. 118) call "analytic bracketing" (cf. Ryen, 2004, pp. 31–42). On the one hand, I see field members' phrases and expressions as more or less mirroring their social reality "out there", in a naturalistic way, on the other hand, I also recognize how this reality is represented and accounted for by the very words and gestures in use. This means a constantly shifting perspective that both takes into account what people say and how they say it (cf. Wieder, 1974).

There are good reasons to believe that something happened that day in this ward—and we might call this "something" the event with the remote control—but there are also good reasons to believe that the involved actors shape and discursively "dress up" all events in various and sometimes quite diverging ways. To highlight this is the point with analytic bracketing, as Gubrium and Holstein (1997) describe it: to artfully recognize both the substantial and the constitutive character of a given piece of qualitative data. The same is true regarding the institutional writing that functions as a special point of interest and empirical contrast in this article. It is also both substantial and constitutive; it reports but it also constructs. In Gubrium and Holstein's terms, we may say that my ambition is to capture the interpretative practice of a given detention home ward and the equivalent activity—more rudimentary—in casebook journals.

3. The Event with the Remote Control: The Formal Versions

The event I want to elaborate upon in this article regards three boys fighting in front of the TV in a detention home in Sweden. When analyzing the staff members' and the boys' accounts in the interview data, I was able to distinguish a range of qualities that were only summarized, indicated, or completely absent in the casebook journal at issue. Since the data are rich and hard to summarize, I won't be able to go in depth regarding everything I found, but I will nonetheless exemplify most of it.

First, I would like to show the institution's textualized version of this event. This is how it was depicted in one of the journals, the one about the boy here called Casper:

> Before dinner, there is a fight on the TV sofa and Casper hits and kicks another pupil, [a little later] when staff arrives and another pupil is aggressive and threatening, Casper sits completely calm in an armchair. When more staff arrive, Casper goes with them to the gaming room for a talk. In the talk, Casper states that other young people had teased and harassed him and that he had had enough and lost it, Casper also

says that his key is missing, during the rest of the day and night he is placed in isolated care [*vård i enskildhet*]. Casper is playing PS3 [PlayStation3] and watching movies, and staff are with him most of the time.

In the journal about Leon, it is written like this:

When Leon and other pupils are watching TV before dinner and Leon reaches for the remote control, Leon gets a blow and a kick from another pupil. Leon turns aggressive and verbally threatening. Arriving staff intervene and hold Leon back. Another pupil is also helping to calm Leon. When further staff arrive, Leon goes with them to his corridor, where he turns more aggressive and verbally threatening. Leon shoves staff a little and says that he wants more space. Staff give him this in the corridor provided that he calms down. After a talk, Leon is calmed down and willing to talk with another pupil to get an explanation. Leon is leaving his corridor after dinner and watches TV with other young people when it is highlighted that another pupil's key is missing. Leon keeps a low profile when staff are looking for the key but maintains his innocence. Leon participates when other pupils put another key [somewhere] and lets staff think that they have found the right key. Leon is searched on the first floor without remarks. Leon talks on the telephone during the night. Leon is playing table tennis during the night.

Finally, in the journal about the third boy, Ben, staff described the fight as follows:

Ben intervenes and calms down another pupil when there is a fight on the TV sofa, but when staff arrive Ben gets loud and starts to shout and scream. Ben is calmed down after a while and leaves the corridor, is informed that there will be no soccer training today and gets irritated because of this. When it becomes clear that another pupil's key is missing, Ben is the loudest one and shows distance to be guilty to having taken it [sic]. Ben is searched on the first floor without remarks, but the key at issue is found during a search of Ben's room. In a talk with the managers of the ward Ben admits that he took the key, which he found on the floor, but that he did not want to say something since he thought that staff was messing with him and he wanted to mess back.

These notes are contextualized by a range of other topics: meals, leisure activities, mood changes, cleaning, excursions, going to the gym, etc. So even though they here might seem quite long as descriptions of a fight, the notes on the event with the remote control are just glimpses in the running records as a whole.

The event as it is described in the study's interviews, on the other hand, involves more details on (1) staff doing "separation work" and immediate manufacturing of accountability, (2) staff and young people invoking ethnicity, gang culture, and "the first blow" as conflict explanations, (3) young people showing containment linked to the institution's privilege system, (4) young people's moral emotions, and (5) reflections on crucial details (the lost key, for instance) as explicitly telling and indicative in the course of events.

I will now take a detour over these aspects to show how they contribute to the case narratives found in the fieldwork. At the end of the article, I return to institutional writing and its peculiarities in this setting. Some of the twists and turns below might, at first sight, seem unnecessarily complicated, but I kindly ask the reader to carry on reading. The fact that the ethnographic stories are multilayered is a point in itself. When staff summarize this event in formal texts, most of the nuances and dynamics from the oral data are left out.

4. "Separation Work" and Staff Accountability

First, when staff hear the noise and shouting in the TV room, they come running. Several describe how they react as fast as possible, running to the room and separating the three guys, Casper, Ben, and Leon. They also start trying to figure out what is happening. Patrick, for instance, says he was sitting in a meeting on another floor when he heard the cries from below, and colleagues came running saying "more staff". He takes the stairs to the TV room, he says, and sees the guys fuming over something that he "didn't understand". He "just grabs one of them and tries to calm him down while my other colleagues grab the other one". Patrick makes up a picture for himself: it is Leon versus Casper, and Ben is associated with Leon.

Patrick and his colleagues describe it as a fight over the remote control, even though they also understand (as they say) that it must be about something else, too. Casper didn't want to give the remote control to the others, and they started fighting. They also describe how they tried to separate the individuals and started asking them questions so that they could tell "their" respective versions. Staff attempted to collect data in order to provide an explanation while they calm people down.

Jesper Hambert: What do you- what do you say to a pupil then, in that situation?

Patrick: Eh, well, what did I, you know, you- you try to sort of ask "what happened"? It's perhaps the stupid, the most stupid question you can ask, "what happened". [Laughs] But- but you'll have to do that then, and then he gets to explain his part.[1]

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[1] I use some signs from a system of a simplified transcription notation in the interview excerpts in this article. A hyphen-minus (-) signifies hesitation or repetition, quotation marks signify animated or reported speech, and inside square brackets, laugh and implicated messages are pointed out. Three dots in round brackets (…) signify an excluded passage.

In several interviews, it is both indicated and exemplified how staff actively collect information and synthesize it to manufacture a coherent account of the event, even though the specific contents of the account vary ("his part"). It seems to be a matter of manufacturing accountability by dyadic and interrogating talks, a sort of ethnomethod to understand and explain drama in social reality (cf. Heritage, 1984, pp. 135–178). The "separation work" and its accountability construction is somewhat indicated in the journal notes—when Casper "goes with them… for a talk", and Leon is given "more space" in the corridor and calmed down "after a talk", for instance—but it is much more visible, elaborate, and comprehensible in the interview data. When listening to the oral accounts, we may also even get a glimpse of how the event was constructed as an event. At first, Patrick "didn't understand what it was", then he started to frame it in terms of two antagonistic constellations.

5. Ethnicity, Gang Culture, and the First Blow

Secondly, and related to the above, staff also came up with background explanations in our interview conversations, such as ethnicity and gang culture, which are absent in the journal notes. Leon and Ben belong to the same ethnic group, speaking the same language, and Casper belongs to another (all non-Swedish). Per, the treatment assistant sitting in the very room when the fight started, points this out when he talks about how impossible it is to prevent these kinds of events. "It just said bang", he says, and he "couldn't have done anything differently". "Well yes", he adds a bit sarcastically, "if I knew all languages of the world, I could have stopped it". Per implies that Leon and Ben had said something in their shared language in front of the TV minutes before the fight, something that he and Casper had not understood. If he had understood it, Per argues, he might have prevented the fight. The background "as such"—ethnicity—was there all along, as he sees it, but it seems to have been played out and emphasized through the use of language at the brink of the fight.

In this light, the remote control turns into a superficial or even silly explanation, according to staff and Ben. "There is so much around this", Patrick says, "behind this" (Moerman, 1974).

Ethnicity is both indicated and explicitly "done" in the interview data (and exposed as a background) and a gang culture explanation follows the same logic. Per has previously worked as a security guard in urban nightlife and "lived in these gang circles", observing gang constellations. He knows, he says, "how they behave". "They do not back off (in a heated conflict situation) 'cause they don't want to leave their positions". If you back off, you will be accused of being a coward. "You fucking pussy, you just ran, ran away", Per says, indicating how gang comments might sound, as he portrays it. This explanation is particularly handy to explain the fact that Casper, Leon, and Ben remain quite close to each other in the

room until staff arrive, shouting and threatening each other, throwing things, lifting up chairs, and so on. In the interviews, it becomes evident that staff observe this and present gang culture outside the institution as an explanation. Gang culture works as a narrative background to the foreground around the TV sofa, not unlike ethnicity (on background and foreground in crime descriptions, see Katz, 1988).

Leon also makes use of ethnicity as an explanation, but in combination with invoking "the first blow", which is another aspect the notes left out. To begin with, he says, in the interview with Jesper Hambert, the fight is partly his fault, too. He "could have been more careful" on the TV sofa, considering what has happened before. Ben and Casper have had fights before, he says, "they hated each other" when they stayed in another ward, and Leon himself is closer to Ben. Leon said:

> And I- I- I used to mostly hang out with NNs [Leon is using the name of his and Ben's ethnic category], you know 'cause it, it feels best in that way, you know, it's nicer, and he [Casper] probably thought I was allied [with Ben] or something like that, you know, that we should beat him or something, you know. That we didn't like him, or, you know, things like that. And I- I always try to (…) be neutral you know, even if I hang around with him a lot, the guy [Ben], so I try to respect others' views and so, you know. Keep me in the middle so that I get out of here.

Now, Leon implies both a delicate ethnic navigation and an ethnic gaze from Casper's side. Casper associates Leon with Ben because of their shared ethnicity, so that Casper's antagonism against Leon is a matter of Leon's ethnically explained history with Ben.

Leon combines this more dynamic and relational employment of ethnicity as an explanation (now it revolves more around a social history than a category) with accounts of "the first blow". Casper was the one hitting first, Leon says. "I reached for the remote control", he says, "then he snatched the control from my hand and then he hit me and kicked me in the face….I didn't get it at all, [it happened] without a reason". The ethnically-based relations, though, turn into Leon's "reason" as he goes on talking, so that this typical background explanation is weaved into a situational one.

Per, a staff member, has another version: Leon shoved an elbow into Casper's chest; that was how it started. In his account, Leon delivers the first blow, but when Leon speaks the elbow disappears and Casper is the one who starts the violence. Still, by merging his account with ethnicity, Leon implies some kind of responsibility, after all. He argues that it might be understandable that Casper becomes angry since he had good reasons to believe that "we [Leon and Ben] would group up", "and beat him".

As Uhnoo (2011, chapters 5 and 6) shows, defining the first blow is utterly important in young people's stories about violence. The one who hits first is the one to

blame the most, young people argue, even though non-physical gestures (like demeaning comments) can sometimes be counted as a first blow. To hit back is defined as morally superior compared to hitting first. So, to narratively place the "first blow" within the actions of somebody else—the other—is a significant part of young people's moral work to account for their actions and uphold a respectful image of themselves despite using violence.

Casper's version is closer to the witness Per's, but more developed. He receives several attacks before hitting back, he claims. It is not only an elbow in his chest (as Per describes it) but also a disrespectful line: "Ey, bitch, can you change the channel?" and a slap in the face. Only after this does Casper hit back, as he tells the story. In Casper's journal, on the other hand, "Casper hits and kicks another pupil" as if there were no history at all (and in Leon's journal: "Leon gets a blow and a kick").

So the facts differ in the notes, but the very moral engagement in the detailed "first blow"-stories are also lacking. The institutional writing does not succeed in capturing the significance that the young people ascribe to concrete fight initiations and their (in this case) ethnic framing.

6. Containment and the Privilege System

A third and striking aspect of the event with the remote control is how the involved actors relate their way of holding back their anger with the institution's privilege system. This seems to be indicated to an extent in the casebook journal when Ben is said to lose his soccer training (even though it is not explicitly stated that this has to do with him being loud and aggressive) but it is much more evident and narratively charged in our interview data. A privilege system is Goffman's (1961/1990, p. 51) term to describe how a total institution controls its inmates by granting or denying them privileges. If you behave, you will gain benefits and relative freedom, if you do not behave, you will lose these things and your freedom is further limited.

In almost any treatment institution, certain kinds of acts are known to extend your stay (and the power of the staff) whereas other acts do the opposite. Also, detention homes in Sweden are ruled by this principle, often called token economy (for an example, see Gradin Franzén, 2014, p. 94). Young people "earn" points for good behavior and can eventually exchange these points for sought-after things. This token economy plays a peculiar role in cases of violence. To avoid being violent, or to be violent in less dramatic ways, is very much associated with "playing it cool" (another of Goffman's terms) in order to "behave". This is what Leon refers to when he talks about the advantage of keeping himself "in the middle so that I get out of here" when he describes the event with the remote control. If he goes on neatly balancing the ethnic quarrels between Ben and Casper (by staying in the middle) he does not risk being perceived as misbehaving, according to staff, and thereby he doesn't risk his chances of getting out of the institution soon. All six detention homes I have visited are, in one way or another, characterized by a privilege system, although the length of stay (formally grounded in the quite flexible law that is used to place young people in institutions to begin with) is far from the only asset at the disposal of staff. If you behave, you may get more internet time, more leisure activities or home visits, more candy or an excursion to a café or a cinema, etc. So even "small" things can be invoked to entice the inmates to act in certain ways—or withdrawn if they act badly.

"Think about yourself", "think about what you have"—phrases like that sometimes link emotional self-control with the institutional system. In relation to the event with the remote control, my colleague Jesper Hambert asks Leon if he has learned to "manage anger and so", and Leon says yes. Then, Jesper Hambert asks how one learns that, and Leon says that "you only have to think about your stuff". "There is no honor or so, that's just bullshit, particularly in places like this". Rather, you'll have to be an "egoist".

> You know, you should think about, if I'd do so, the consequences will be so and that's not good for me. I've come this far, 'cause I've come quite far actually. And so. And I want to get that apartment, you know. You should always think about what you risk losing, instead of just [thinking about] the moment, now.

Leon also says that he "wants to get away from here": "I think it's one of the biggest reasons why I didn't do anything against him [Casper] afterwards", he said.

So, no "honor", being an "egoist", "the consequences"—when Leon accounts for his "reasons" to hold back his violence "afterwards" (that is, directly after the fight in front of the TV, and when staff arrived to try to separate them) he draws upon the local system of privileges and makes his actions accountable in light of this. The fact that he controlled himself and abstained from fighting the staff that came running to hold him back from kicking and hitting Casper is tightly related to how "far" he has come in the local token economy.

The apartment that he wants is a so-called training apartment in a downtown area, a sort of in-between-station on the way to freedom, a way for those who behave to try out a normal life. Leon does not want to risk that. You only get "more and more troubles if you keep on fighting every day", he says. There are good reasons not to seek revenge. "You have to choose your battles", he says. "I was just about to get out and so, get home visits". "I didn't want to lose that".

Now, he has "dropped this", Leon says. But it could have been different. He did get very angry. He states that in similar situations:

> I get so mad, you know. I get really, really, really mad, so I just wanna, I just wanna see blood. That's how mad I get.

Leon also says that if the event had occurred in another ward, the acute ward in the (typical) beginning of the detention home journey, he would have reacted differently. Then "I would have tried to kill him", Leon says. For an outsider, all this might sound strange, but I would argue that the logic of total institutions and their privilege system provide some clarity. In an acute ward, Leon had not "gone far". At that stage, he would have nothing to lose—no privilege, no promises of a training apartment, not even chances to make home visits. To restrain oneself in that situation (that stage in the token economy) would hardly be necessary, at least not to the same extent as in the ward where Leon is placed now.

In the way the casebook journal depicted the event with the remote control, there is no information regarding these issues or the actors' accounting for their actions along such lines. Similar to Enell's (2017) finding, the formal texts do not take into account what field members take into account: the fact that what is said and done in these settings belong to and depend on the very settings.

7. Moral Emotions

Self-controlled anger in institutional settings also has its limits. According to Jack Katz (1988, pp. 18–31), we can talk about moral emotions—strong feelings of eagerness to do the "right" thing, to put things in the moral order, to defend one's respectable identity and stand up for The Good. Katz argues that many crimes of violence are characterized by such emotions, such as humiliation turned into rage. The perpetrator strives to construct morality—a vision of something "good"—even though it certainly may not look like that from the outside, and sometimes not for the actor him or herself later on when the heat of emotions is gone.

In the event with the remote control, Leon accounts for holding back these emotions—he would be right to strike back against Casper but restrains himself in order to avoid losing institutional rewards—but Casper, on the other hand, represents something else.

Casper describes several attacks before hitting back. He is called "a bitch" and gets an elbow in his chest and a slap in his face—when he accounts for his punch and kick, he implies a feeling of "enough is enough", "now even I have to respond". He is placing the same feeling in the situation when Leon asks him why he gets mad: "I'm no doll you can hit". Casper does not explain his acts in terms of a simple and direct answer to Leon's first attack but rather as an answer after three attacks. He is emphasizing his tolerance up to that stage. But eventually also Casper wants restored respect; he doesn't want to be "a doll". Do the others think so? Now he will show them.

That is the point of Casper's story: the need to stand up for oneself. He accounts for his acts in terms of Katz' moral emotions—humiliation turning to rage—and clearly communicates a feeling of retained respect. When Leon throws a glass and Casper throws the remote control, Leon says (in Casper's story) "you mother fucker",

and Casper cannot stand that either. Leon has lifted up a chair, ready to throw that too, and Casper does the same. Staff stop them both.

If somebody hits you and you do not hit back, Casper says, "they'll know you're a pussy… Then they will hit you all the time":

> You'll have to show them that you got, that you can, otherwise they will call you, 'cause, you know, like it is in a prison, that you're fish ["fish" was said in English], that you're fresh, you know, they can hit you anytime.

So even though all three individuals restrain themselves—Casper also gets credit from staff for having "calmed down so quickly"—there is a risk in this kind of setting to do so without limits, according to the interview data. To be a "doll" is not a preferable position, and therefore Casper needs to defend himself. He holds back but he also engages in moral emotions and associated violence, almost as if invoking a "convict code" (Wieder, 1974). First, he exercises self-control, then revenge.

Casper does not talk about upcoming home visits or a training apartment waiting for him, he does not draw on the institutional rewards to account for his actions. Rather, he draws on moral emotions. Such accounts can be seen as a more detailed and emic version of staff accounts of gang culture. With the help of actors' narratives, we may complicate the more categorical and distant explanations of staff, finding both tensions and nuances that are not really able to grasp when you come running and try to carry out treating assistant duties—tensions and nuances not included in the casebook notes.

Indeed, Casper is said to have "had enough and lost it" in the journal note, since "other young people had teased and harassed him", but the notion of standing up for oneself is much more elaborate and morally accountable in oral versions.

8. Crucial Details

Finally, a fifth aspect: crucial details. Per, for instance, talks about several details in the course of events that seem hard to ignore once you know them. Just before the incident, Ben walks to the toilet but forgets his key to his room on the sofa. Per observes this as well as the fact that Leon takes the key and offers it to Casper, but Casper says he doesn't want it. Per interprets this as a prequel to the violence—a way for Leon to plant a reason for him and Ben to strike against Casper. If Casper would have taken the key it would be easy for Leon to "disclose" this when Ben returned from the toilet, so that they both could be righteously angry with Casper. They could have started a fight with him with a key theft as a cause. "Leon and Ben could have attacked the third guy for a reason", Per says.

Now, this reason didn't crystallize, but the very attempt from Leon's side functions as an indication in ret-

rospect, according to Per's story, a sort of warning that intrigues were in the making. It is also a nice illustration of the social need for reasons to start a fight. In line with Uhnoo's (2011) and Jackson-Jacobs' (2013) findings, hitting back is morally superior and practically easier compared to hitting first.

In Ben's story, there are other details. In his interview he talks about Casper being a liar and that he cannot be trusted, he even tested him once at another ward to prove this. Ben came up with a story of having a hidden knife in his room and told this to Casper, and later the same evening staff decided to arrange an extra search in the rooms. No knife was found, of course, since Ben has made it all up, but Ben took it as evidence for Casper being a collaborator with staff. "I started to suspect something, that he was the one who had told [staff] something". That is one of the reasons he cannot be trusted and therefore actually deserves to be corrected and excluded. When the fight broke out in front of the TV, Ben immediately stood up on Leon's side. He tried to calm him a bit, but eventually, he turned very angry with Casper, shouting "mother fucker" to him and throwing a chair towards him—all according to his own description. Afterwards, staff praises him for trying to calm Leon but criticize him for throwing the chair. He loses an outdoor activity because of that (probably the soccer training, mentioned in the journal notes).

Casper mentions yet another detail. After the fight, it turns out that *his* room key was lost. It was lying on the sofa in front of the TV, attached to a chain that Casper has had "since he was a kid", as he says. The rooms were searched later on and the key was found but not the chain—this is also mentioned quite extensively in the journal notes. Somehow Leon and Ben had managed to take and hide Casper's key during the fight, and then probably threw away the chain that Casper was apparently very fond of. It's hard to not look upon this story as revolving around revenge—Casper portrays Leon and Ben as striking back against him with theft. "Then they had taken it from me", Casper says. "You know, they have bullied me so fucking much the whole time".

The keys, the chain, the story about the knife at another ward—the narrators of this event consecutively employ details to unfold its drama and account for its hidden dimensions. Details are treated as telling, revealing—through them the narrators may weave their morals and set the evaluations right. Parts of the stories regarding the keys are included in the journal notes but in these texts they are not treated as indicative in the same sense as in the interviews. For Per, the prequel with the key proves that Ben and Leon were, in a sense, waiting to strike against Casper and that this constellation was fixed. For Casper, the epilogue with his key and chain symbolizes his ongoing victimization. For Ben, the fictive knife theft at another ward proved that Casper was no one to trust.

In the journal notes, on the other hand, the words about the key are not explicitly interpreted but rather treated as a list of facts ("the key at issue is found during a search of Ben's room"; "Ben admits that he took the key"; "[Leon] lets staff think that they have found the right key") even if they seem implicitly dressed up as moral facts. The institutional writing does not capture the actors' way of using the details representatively and as a resource for conflict accounts.

9. Institutional Omissions and Transformations

Similar to other events in my study, the event with the remote control shows how multifaceted social life at a detention home can be, perhaps especially so when it comes to violence. Analytically we can switch between, on the one hand, "diving" into the situation and naturalistically reconstructing a course of events as careful and nuanced as possible and, on the other hand, identifying how various actors present it and perform their roles, moral points, and positions. Gubrium and Holstein's (1997, p. 118) analytic bracketing is helpful: a continuous and dialectal procedure to acknowledge both local substances and local constitutive activities. It is a matter of accepting and balancing the tension between "whats" and "hows".

The staff come running to the TV room, separating the fighting individuals and start manufacturing accountability. They put together bits and pieces—observational, moral, dramaturgical, etc.—to get a rough image of what has happened. One staff (Per), who was there "from the start" (in the room) not only suggests category-based explanations but also adds his more detailed view: a prequel with a key, and another "first blow" that others took for granted, and explicit interpretations based on the details. Ethnicity and gang culture are suggested as background explanations, but they are also weaved into the foreground in the actors' narratives. Staff and youth argue that they can see the consequences and employment of both.

The young people also deconstruct the first blow and discern finer variants. Even the ones feeling targeted by violence (Ben, for instance) express some understanding of it, and they all emphasize that it could have been much worse. Step by step, the accounts in the interviews start dealing with self-control and how it is embedded into the institutional privilege system. The ward gives benefits to you if you behave but it withdraws them if you misbehave. To withhold acting out one's moral emotions—strong feelings of doing Good, in Katz' (1988) terms—and to think only about "yourself" and your future are identical to following the institution's incitements. But the event with the remote control also shows that such self-control must be balanced with demonstrations of self-assertion, as the young people see it. Violence can be performed to avoid being bullied (cf. Athens, 1992, 1997), even if institutional privileges are put at risk.

In the casebook journal, we get much more truncated versions. In a way, they resemble the sketch given by the staff who came running to the room and who was re-

ferring, at least to begin with, to their first impressions. "Before dinner, there is a fight on the TV sofa", it says in the journal about Casper. He "hits and kicks" another young man. Casper is said to have argued that "other young people had teased him and harassed him", "he had enough and lost it" (in Swedish: *tappade det*), meaning he lost his temper and self-control. There are some outlines of backgrounds, as in Casper's journal where it is said that he has been teased and harassed by others before, and there are similar outlines of significant details, as in Leon's and Ben's journals where the missing key is accounted for. But the picture is still much more compressed.

There is nothing on the moral analysis and debate in the texts—nothing about the notion of the first blow and its low moral value among young people in general, almost nothing about the more durable and tense background relation between Casper, Leon, and Ben. There are no fully understandable prequels regarding the room key, and nothing on the limits of containment and its embeddedness in a privilege system, as the field members themselves see it. In the journal about Leon, it says, very briefly, that he gets "a blow and a kick by another pupil" when he reaches for a remote control. In the journal about Ben, it says that "there is a fight on the TV sofa" this day. When staff arrives, Ben "gets loud and starts to shout and scream" but he calms down after a while. Casper's key is found in Ben's room—no, "another pupil's key" is found there, it says in the institutional text about Ben.

The latter formulation points to a striking and crucial fact when it comes to textualized events in these kinds of institutions. Casebook journals are characterized by strict individualization. In Ben's "journal world" there is no Casper or Leon, just "another pupil", "another boy", or the like—and vice versa when it comes to Casper's and Leon's journals. Staff writing about a given inmate is about that single inmate, not about his or her relations to others, at least not in terms of concretely described personal relations. When "another pupil" or the like is mentioned, it is never pointed out that this is the same "other pupil" as, for instance, the one in yesterday's note. We need sources outside journals to obtain descriptions of concrete courses of events or chains of interactions in which other young people—and staff—are crystallized, and in which the individual as a person gets shape and contour, as well.

Staff writing does not engage in substantiating, understanding, or unfolding relations. Rather, actions are presented in ways that render them quite atomic. When relations are depicted, they are articulated in terms of what they result in for the individual at issue: others had "teased him and harassed him [Casper]".

The point with zooming in a transient situation like the event with the remote control with the help of ethno-graphic interviews beyond the institutional writing is not only to get a glimpse of how violence is constituted if studied in detail—by a series of words, gestures, attacks, attributed motives, diverging and converging accounts, etc. The point is also to clarify what the institutional writing omits or transforms. When reporting the event with the remote control, there are no words typed into the digital journal system on the implications of the institution, its social life, its rules and individual staff actors. There are only observations of troublesome clients and their moral characters.

In fact, by only drawing on casebook journals, it might be difficult to trace how Leon, Ben and Casper's fight are one and the same. The date, the TV sofa, the stories around the key and the remote control can function as clues, but in other respects, the notes are written as to reflect and report on an individual's actions and his conditions. They are not written to mirror social life at the ward, let alone emerging situations of violence within this social life. Many qualities tied to sociality are absent or merely vaguely indicated, but they are widely and vividly employed when the event is recounted and dramatized in oral storytelling to a visiting researcher.

10. Conclusion

Casebook journals are made up of running notes on care and surveillance that form material for upcoming placements and treatment programs. As Enell (2017, p. 137) shows regarding the written assessments in this setting, these texts may have varying significance in practice. The consequences depend on how caseworkers act upon the texts, how they are employed to legitimize this or that route in the social service system. Caseworkers make use of the texts to account for their decisions, so in that sense their reading turns crucial for young people, but hardly the texts as such. Rather, the significance is a matter of texts-plus-professional-interpretation. "The written assessment in itself had less or no meaning to the young people" (Enell, 2017, p. 137).

But for the sake of social science, contrasts between oral and formally written versions of institutional life can be quite illustrative. What is put into the record (the texts as such) and what is left out says something about how client-producing institutions function and define themselves.

If, again, compared with researchers' production of ethnographic field notes (Emerson et al., 1995, pp. 8–12), it is clear that one cannot separate the writer's methods from findings in the institutional text production.[2] "What the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected to how she finds it" (Emerson et al., 1995, pp. 8–12). The writing method—to employ an individualizing gaze, depicting Leon, Ben and Casper (and all other young peo-

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[2] By this comparison, I do not mean to stress similarities between ethnographers and staff at a detention home. Ethnographers are trained in observation, note taking, and analysis whereas detention home staff are not. Rather, I want to point out that there are some insights in the method literature regarding procedures in which ethnographic observations are turned into texts that are probably relevant also for other observations turned into texts, such as in social work.

ple in care) as troublesome clients who once in a while get very agitated and involved in heated fights—will inevitably produce the "finding" that Leon, Ben and Casper are especially distressed individuals, acting in especially unpredictable or problematic ways, although quite independent of the fact we see clearly in interviews: that they are placed together in a TV room and put under the pressure to get along in a total institution. A casebook journal is stylistically and rhetorically organized in a way that not only facilitates this production of "findings", it also rules out or obscures alternative methods and their potential results.

In the notes about Leon, for instance, staff cannot start writing in terms of "and then Leon talked again about his long and antagonistic relation to Casper, and Casper talked about being bullied by Leon and Ben", since (1) staff are supposed to anonymize others, (2) staff are supposed to treat such facets as too remote from "the case", and (3) the case is *client Leon*, not the fight. The interpretative practice of an institution does not define such accounts as something to "write up". The writing is supposed to be focused on this or that youth in treatment, not on sociality in a ward and certainly not on situationally embedded logic of a total institution.

Ironically, though, my data show that staff do observe and articulate what is left out in the formal notes, so the reason behind this division cannot be understood in terms of a lack of staff or youth capacity. The folk sociological gaze is there—among staff, among youth—but it is not supposed to be inscribed into the texts. The involved actors narrate alternative variants of conflict accountability, and they do so not only in medical or category-based terms but also in interactionist and institutional ones. But interactions or institutions are not the targets for therapy and incarceration. The young people are the targets and the associated texts work as icons for that practice. This means that the function of writing an institutional text is less about representing clients and more about reproducing a particular kind of institution and its *raison d'être*. Institutional writing is part of the "endogenous reproductive processes through which institutional realities are maintained" and as such, it is largely invisible for field members (Heritage, 1984, p. 232). Staff may think that they write about (for instance) Leon but—sociologically—they write for the institution. The first is evident and talked about, whereas the latter is not really noticed.

Could more nuanced written descriptions improve the understanding of social life in a total institution and troubled young people's lives? Yes and no. Treatment assistants would probably benefit from a freer genre to write within. Patterns of interactions could be discovered, typifications deconstructed and the institution (and not only the individual) could be discovered analytically—by staff and youth. Some "regrouping of particulars", as Heritage (1984, p. 230) puts it, is basically possible, even a shift of paradigms if, for instance, the staff were more educated in ethnography and social theory. But no matter the style and wording, no writer can capture social life in full. Accounting procedures, ethnomethodologists teach us, are infinite. There is no final word on social reality, no way of settling a perfect or complete account. "Any description is thus inherently selective in relation to the state of affairs it describes" (Heritage, 1984, p. 150).

By juxtaposing institutional texts with interview accounts from ethnographic studies, we can learn what this means in social work practice. To expand and complicate institutional texts for its own sake, to "cover" more and more of the drama in the wards, is essentially a futile project. Given the fact that young people in these settings do not want more texts, it is also ethically dubious. What these young people want is to get out of the institutions and get on with their lives—to feel better, to improve their social relations, and to attain more appreciated social identities through studies and work. In order to reach this, they prefer personal interactions (Levin, 2017, pp. 40–43) and not texts, no matter how precise.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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About the Author

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Article

Contingent Control and Wild Moments: Conducting Psychiatric Evaluations in the Home

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Abstract

When social control and social service workers go into the field, into the "native habitat" of some problem, a variety of tacit structures and controls that mark office work with its standardized documents and formal meetings are weakened or absent entirely. As a result, compared to office settings, social control work in field settings tends to become open, contingent, unpredictable, and on occasion even wild. This article provides a strategic case study of the distinctive features of social control decision-making in the field, drawing on observations of field work by psychiatric emergency teams (PET) from the 1970s. PET typically went to the homes of psychiatrically-troubled persons in order to conduct evaluations for involuntary mental hospitalization. This article will analyze the varied, situationally-sensitive practices these workers adopted to evaluate such patients in their own homes.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "'Producing People' in Documents and Meetings in Human Service Organizations", edited by Malin Åkerström (Lund University, Sweden) and Katarina Jacobsson (Lund University, Sweden).

1. Introduction

This article will analyze the distinctive features of doing psychiatry in home and field settings, focusing on a historically remote but relatively unalloyed form of psychiatric homework—that practiced by psychiatric emergency teams (PET) in private homes in the early 1970s. In California, PET was created in response to the closing of the large state mental hospitals and the turn toward community mental health. Mental health centers in Los Angeles organized two-person psychiatric teams to go out into the community in response to citizen calls for crisis intervention and mental hospital evaluation. These units functioned as psychiatric gatekeepers under California's Lanterman-Petris-Short (LPS) Act passed in 1969. Following a request from some family member or other private party, teams went out to the homes of those reported as psychiatrically disturbed to conduct evaluations for possible hospitalization. PET and the police were the only field agencies authorized to order involuntary hospitalization. In the home, the team would try to talk with the "candidate patient" (see Holstein, 1993) about current problems or the allegations of misconduct that had been reported. On deciding that hospitalization was necessary, the teams called an ambulance service to restrain and transport unwilling and sometimes violently resistant patients. Hospitalized patients could be then held for 14 days at the discretion of hospital staff.

Although our observations of these psychiatric teams were collected over four decades ago,[1] PET decision-making highlights a number of extreme features of field

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[1] Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health continues to field mobile "crisis evaluation teams" with the authority to initiate involuntary hospitalization (see dmh.lacounty.gov).

and homework and thus provides a particularly instructive case study of the processes of clientization (Gubrium & Järvinen, 2014) and social control carried in non-office settings. In what follows, we will analyze the distinctive contingencies of decision-making grounded in homes and other non-institutional settings, thrown into high relief by PET interventions.

2. Frontline Decision-Making in Field Settings

A number of comparative analyses of the work of social service and social control institutions have analyzed the decision-making activities of agents who have regular, direct interaction with those being serviced or processed. Termed "front-line bureaucrats" (Smith, 1965), "street-level bureaucrats" (Lipsky, 1980), "frontline" workers or officials (Dingwall, Eekelaar, & Murray, 1983). These agents include:

> [T]eachers, police officers and other law enforcement personnel, social workers, judges, public lawyers and other court officers, health workers, and many other public employees who grant access to government programs and provide service within them. (Lipsky, 1980, pp. 3–4)

Direct frontline contacts with clients create common work features, including broad discretion in applying general rules and policies to specific cases, persistent concern with husbanding and allocating time, energy and resources, and having to "deal with clients' personal reactions" to decisions affecting their fates (Lipsky, 1980, p. 9).

However, analyses of frontline social control have generally paid little attention to *exactly where* decisions are made (for recent exceptions see Hall, 2017; Ferguson, 2018). Yet different settings and contexts create fundamental variations in control and service encounters; in particular, critical differences mark interactions with clients and others that take place in an office or other institutional setting, and such encounters occurring in the field, often in "*the native habitat of the problem*" (Bittner, 1970, p. 40, emphasis added). Examples of the former include client contacts with courts, lawyers and prosecutors, with physicians in medical offices and hospital settings, with psychiatrists in clinical settings, and with correctional officers working on prison floors. Frontline decision-making in unofficial "native habitats" occurs on a variety of occasions: Citizen encounters with police patrol officers and traffic enforcers, in-home visits by probation and parole officers, child protection and social workers, medical home caregivers and hospice workers.

Frontline fieldwork encounters in native habitats may occur in either public or private places. The former includes contacts in distinctly public spaces—most notably police patrol work on the streets—and in somewhat less open quasi-public settings—malls, restaurants, bars, and a variety of workplaces. In contrast, other occasions of frontline fieldwork unfold in private places legally authorized "to maintain their boundaries and determine their own interaction without interference from the outside" (Stinchcombe, 1963, p. 151). Such fieldwork occurs when probation and parole officers, social workers, child protection workers, and the police responding to calls involving domestic problems carry out their work in private homes or semi-private residential facilities (e.g., nursing homes, rehab programs, etc.).

This article will analyze frontline decision-making in private homes. Prior research suggests subtle but profound differences in decision-making in homes as opposed to office and other institutional settings (Ferguson, 2018). Consider the comprehensive study by Dingwall et al. (1983) on health visitors and child protection/neglect social workers in the UK in the early 1980s. While on occasion seeing clients in clinical settings, these workers regularly visited families with newborn children or where an issue of possible child abuse or neglect had been raised. Interpretative practices employed in the field contrasted with those characteristic of the office- and clinic-based medical practitioners and legal agents who dominated subsequent stages of child protection case processing. The former relied on "social evidence" to decide whether a particular child was abused or neglected and saw the children as "social objects" (Dingwall et al., 1983, pp. 55–78). In contrast, office-based child protection professionals relied on "clinical evidence" and constructed the children as "clinical objects" (Dingwall et al., 1983, pp. 31–54). Tensions between the practices and objects of fieldwork and office decision-making permeated the identification and processing of child protection cases.

Decision-making in home and other field settings face a number of distinctive contingencies and dilemmas. In the first place, working in the home loosens the chain of supervision to a much greater degree than ordinarily occurs in office work; such workers have greater mobility, more unaccountable time and hence more discretionary latitude in how they deal with cases compared to office workers. Second, in both home and field settings control agents frequently enter local environments they have not previously encountered and about which they know little or nothing. Agents working in private households in particular operate in terrains controlled by native habitants, in the process running up against particularistic social and living arrangements, in-situ constraints and demands, and complex multi-party relationships. Third, the stances of local parties toward official intervention may well turn out to be equivocal, indeterminate, or even directly resistant. As a result, both home and field decision-makers may regularly encounter unpredictable, difficult-to-control, even wild situations.

In the 21st century the frequency of decision-making in the homes of clients and patients may be increasing: many treatment and control institutions augment office contacts by sending personnel to the homes of those being treated or supervised. A number of recent stud-

ies highlight social work outreach to the homeless on the streets (Hall, 2017) and the importance of home visits in working with problemed families (Ferguson, 2018). Similarly, while probation and parole supervision can be provided in office settings, regular efforts are made to visit clients in order to evaluate their current living situations and get more direct readings of their current adjustment (Paik, 2011). In medical practice nurses and physical therapists are routinely sent to the homes of recovering surgery patients and a wide variety of social welfare agencies send agents to evaluate or work with clients in their homes. As a result, low-income families with serious medical, mental health and legal problems may have official contact with multiple officials, many of whom frequently visit the home (Paik, 2017).

Parallel trends mark the mental health field. While much psychiatric practice still centers in institutional and office settings, outreach efforts directed toward the homeless, street addicts, and "runaways" are provided outside office contexts, often on the streets (e.g., Hall, 2017), but also in temporary residential facilities such as hostels and shelters (Farrell, Huff, MacDonald, Middlebro, & Walsh, 2005; Goering, Wasylenki, Lindsay, Lemire, & Rhodes, 1997). Programs emphasizing community psychiatry are keyed to outreach practices directed to local neighborhoods, streets and homes (e.g., Terkelsen & McCarthy, 1994). Mental health clinics in the US cities provide crisis intervention through visits to field settings and a variety of innovative treatment programs, such as the Open Dialogue Approach originated in Finland, rely on mobile crisis intervention teams (Seikkula & Olson, 2003).

3. Two Case Studies of Psychiatric Intervention in the Homes of Patients

We develop our analysis by examining two cases illustrating the dynamics of conducting psychiatric evaluations in the homes of candidate patients.[2] These cases, involving women we call Tina Williams and Jo Sherman, were selected because they display features that highlight two significant attributes of PE teams' psychiatric homework. First, variations in how PET workers attended and responded to the local and contextual features of encountering patients in their homes. Second, the possibilities for *wildness* that such home evaluations could generate.

3.1. Tina Williams

PET received a call about a woman whose problemed behavior was recorded as follows: "Threatened neighbors, broke window, tried [to] hit caller when he asked question yesterday. Moved into building three weeks ago. Pounds on floor and hammers at night. Invites people in

off street. Police there four [times] in last three days. Tells stories of things that [had] not happened".

The call was initiated by a neighbor identified as Alan, a driver from an ambulance service often used by PET to transport patients to mental hospitals. A team, led by a psychiatrist, Dr. Rogers, who had long experience in office practice before beginning to work with PET, and Cathy Collins, a public health nurse who frequently participated on mobile teams, was formed to respond to the call. Both team members were white. Rogers emphasized the reports of paranoid violence and insisted that the police be called to meet the team at the candidate patient's address.

Rogers and Collins, accompanied by one observer, drove to an apartment in a predominantly black inner-city neighborhood; two white police officers and three black neighbors—Alan Crenshaw, his wife and a woman who lived on the first floor—were waiting outside. Alan began by explaining: "This woman [Tina Williams] moved in here. It hasn't been one month....From the first she was kind of weird". Crenshaw, noting that he was the apartment manager, described a number of trouble incidents involving Tina. Rogers, responding that "she sounds paranoid", cut off further talk; "Let's go see the woman".

All six of us walked up the stairs and gather in the hall outside one of the two second-floor units. Rogers knocked loudly a number of times, eventually eliciting a response: "Go away. Tina's not here. Her sister's here". Both the police and Rogers urged the speaker to open the door; one of the officers eventually shifted tactics to say that they wanted to come in to help Tina with her problem with the woman downstairs. Finally, Tina unlocked the door, saying only the police could come in. But Rogers, Collins and I followed the officers inside.

As we entered Tina retreated down the hall into a bedroom and sat on the bed, Rogers and the two cops standing in the doorway. A black woman in her 30s wearing a halter top and shorts, Tina complained to the police that Alan had held a gun on her and they should do something about it. But the police edged back into the hall, and Rogers moved forward: "I'm Dr. Rogers. I'd like to ask you a few questions". Tina correctly identified the day of the week and the month, but then added: "This don't make sense. This must be Alan. It must be Alan".

Rogers and Collins pressed Tina to come with them to a hospital for help. Tina equivocated, saying on the one hand "I will go with you if you want me to"; but on the other strongly objected: "Why y'all gonna put me in jail? Why are you holding me when it's the guy downstairs that did it? This is wrong! This is really wrong!" She raised the possibility of going to her sister's in Kansas City. But both team members insisted on the need to go to the hospital, and eventually Collins used the house phone to call a local mental hospital to confirm Tina's admission.

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[2] The authors personally conducted all the fieldwork for this project. In the fieldnotes that follow, direct quotations mark dialogue jotted into a notebook as the interaction proceeded. Entries without quotations are indirect quotations—paraphrases recalled from memory when full fieldnotes were written as soon as possible after leaving the field (see Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, pp. 63–66). The accounts provided here are selected summaries; additional fieldnote material will be provided in later analyses.

As Tina heard this, she begged Rogers: "Don't take me to the hospital. Don't do that. Don't do that….I won't go to the hospital….Why you gonna put me in the hospital?" Rogers: "It will help you feel better, so you can go to Kansas City, or to Tina's house, or wherever".

The psychiatric team and the police urged Tina to get dressed. She began to do so but broke away to go into the living room to call her mother-in-law in LA to ask about staying with her rather than going to the hospital. She talked on the phone for some minutes, but it was clear that her mother-in-law would not take her in. Back in her bedroom Tina again pleaded to be allowed to go to Kansas City or to her "momma's"; PET responded that she could do that after she was out of the hospital and feeling better.

Tina now had a dress on, and with urging from the police, put her shoes on, continuing to protest that what they should have done is take Alan's gun. When the phone rang, she went to the living room to answer it: "Hi. They're getting ready to take me to jail". Rogers and Collins: "No, no, to the hospital". It's her daughter, and she told her: "That nigger got me in all this trouble". After a few exchanges, Collins took over the phone and gave the caller the phone number of the mental hospital in order to contact Tina. (Collins later told Rogers that the caller was not her daughter but a friend). Finally, team members and the police ushered Tina down the stairs and into the police car for the trip to the hospital.

3.2. Jo Sherman

PET had been contacted several times by a man who reported that his wife was disturbed; she had moved into her own apartment, leaving him and their son. He had been unable to convince her to go to the hospital and wanted PET's assistance. Art, a white psychiatric social worker, and Bea, a black psych tech, arranged to meet him at the apartment where his wife had moved some ten days previously. The apartment was located a block off the Sunset Strip, an area marked by a number of bars and clubs and an active night life.

At the address we were met by a youth who asked if we had come to talk to Jo Sherman, and who then led us to #6, a second-floor unit at the rear of the small apartment complex. The door to the apartment was open, and Mr. Sherman came out and briefly talked with Art, explaining that his wife had not been taking her medications because she thought that her doctor was against her, that he's a Nazi.

The four of us entered a one-room apartment (the son—Rickie, 9—sat down outside the open door) and found a white woman with long black hair (a wig, Bea later told me) in her early 30s dressed in a loose yellow blouse and jeans, sitting on the bed with a blue blanket drawn around her shoulders. Bea introduced the team. The husband said something to his wife which I did not hear, and she responded with a loud tirade: Don't listen to him, he's a dope addict, he's a dupe, he's a criminal.

Art sat down on the floor facing her, and after explaining that we are from County Mental Health Services, continued: We really don't know what's going on here. We got a call and we came out and we wanted to see what we can do to help. Like are you having problems? To which Jo responded: "No. No problems". Art: "Well, we heard that you disappeared". Jo: "I left my husband". Art: "How have you been getting by? How have you been supporting yourself?" Jo: "I got ATD [Aid to the Disabled])". "Is that enough to live on?" "Yes, I don't need much money".

Jo then shifted back to her husband, who had been sitting in chair across the room: "He's trying to kill me….The mother's trying to kill me. He's the ringleader of the Communists. But I'm not worried, I can take care of it….I'm with intelligence, my father works for the State Dept. and they know what's going on". Art asked whether she had seen her doctor. "No. He's a dope addict and he's with the Nazi Party". Art pressed her to come in to the clinic to get more medicine, but Jo declined and continued to accuse her husband.

Art, Bea and I moved out on to the balcony to discuss how to proceed, leaving Mr. S in the apartment with his wife. Art and Bea conferred, the former commenting: "She's pretty out of it, she's pretty angry about it", the latter agreeing. They decided to call an ambulance to have her hospitalized. But when the husband came out the door, we heard Jo yelling: "Get the son of bitch out of here!" A scuffle broke out at the doorway, Art later reporting that the husband had slugged her. Jo shouted: "You get out, you Communist leader", and then threatened to call the police to remove him, PET and sociologist from her apartment. She confronted Art: "You can't take me away either". Art replied: "We didn't say we were—we ain't gonna take you away". "We'd like to help you here". Jo: "Help me then". Bea began talking gently with Jo and moved into the apartment with her; I left with Art and the husband to find a phone to call the ambulance.

On our way out, Art suggested trying to use the phone of the apartment manager, and when the latter answered her door and agreed to let him use her phone, Art asked about Jo: "How's she been?" "She's quiet. Just very quiet and no problems but haven't really seen her leave the building. It's kind of, like, she's on a downer". We then visited the owner who lived in the unit, who also described Ms. S as "very quiet and very nice". "No one's complained?" "No one's complained". She noticed that she had the place "all straightened up" and that had impressed her. Again, she seemed "very sweet, very nice".

At this point Art had abandoned the plan to call an ambulance to hospitalize Jo and indicated that he would talk to her about medications and ask the manager and owner to keep an eye on her. Insisting that the husband stay outside, Art had a long talk to Jo, focusing on the medications prescribed by a psychiatrist she had seen recently. Art emphasized several times: "We don't want to hospitalize you; if you will just take your meds we won't have to hospitalize you". He asked Jo to take her

meds then and there (her son had reported that she has flushed pills down the toilet), but she refused, saying they make her sleepy; she also explained that she had flushed pills given her by another psychiatrist down the toilet because they had not been in a prescription bottle. Eventually Art accepted her promise to take her prescribed meds that evening and said that he would check back with her in a day or two.

Despite racial and neighborhood differences, these cases reveal a number of similar features: Women living alone in their own apartments, acting in ways that psychiatric workers viewed as unquestionably paranoid but interspersed with lucid exchanges, and displaying deep anger and profound suspicion toward the parties who had sought intervention. But the teams ultimately took very different actions, in one case hospitalizing the patient over her strong objections, in the second avoiding hospitalization by patching together an ad hoc plan to leave the patient in her home. In what follows we want to examine the generic processes marking these home-based psychiatric evaluations and efforts at clientization.

4. The Problematics of Psychiatric Homework

PET workers were acutely aware of the difficulties of conducting psychiatric evaluations in others' native habitats: not only did they not control the space in which the evaluation was to take place, but they also lacked immediate access to the full range of therapeutic responses available in their own clinic. Indeed, many community mental health center staff members refused go out to the field at all for these reasons. And the standard response of those who routinely did home visits was to urge even overtly resistant patients to come into the clinic for immediate help. Art explained the rationale for this default position on the drive back to the clinic after a home visit:

> [The office provides] a whole new ballgame....Once you get them in the office there is a whole different tone....It's our territory. We can be more aggressive, and they have to respond. We'll be able to work directly to make arrangements.

Thus, workers relied on a set of distinctive practices to conduct home evaluations: gaining and maintaining contact with often uncommitted patients; reading the local context; managing the presence of others at the local scene; dealing with divergent local concerns; and balancing the sometimes conflicting implications of psychological disturbance and practical manageability in home situations.

4.1. Gaining and Maintaining Access to Candidate Patients in the Home

PET confronted the problematics of clientization in stark form: lacking assured access to the patient, even gaining entrée to the home could pose a formidable problem.

Workers routinely turned to the caller, particularly a family member, to gain access to the patient, often successfully. But if the caller did not live with or had an antagonistic relationship with the patient, the result could be overt and hostile resistance, as occurred in the case of Jo Sherman. Similarly, Tina Williams resisted repeated requests to open the door, stymying the team for some 15 or 20 minutes until taken in by a ruse initiated by the police.

In initially encountering candidate patients, workers typically explained who they were and proposing that their presence was an effort to "help" with any "personal problems", as with Jo Sherman. When Jo rejected this initial offer, insisting that she had "no problems", Art pressed her: "We're from the clinic, we'd like to get you some more medicine, and we'd like to help you there. Would you come to the clinic?"

Similarly, Rogers had introduced himself to Tina Williams as a doctor (not a psychiatrist), and elaborated this stance once inside the apartment:

> "I'm Dr. Rogers. I'd like to ask you a few questions. Could you tell me what day it is?" Tina initially responds "Now, what is all this for?", then correctly identifies the current day and month. When Rogers responds "A lot of people don't know that. I'm not trying to trick you", Tina insists: "You must be....This don't make sense. This must be Alan. It must be Alan".

Here the psychiatrist moved immediately from his minimal self-introduction to ask two questions, checking appropriate psychological orientation. Tina expressed confusion but quickly provided the correct answers, reluctantly cooperating with the team while conveying deep distrust of the process as something initiated by the complainant—"this must be Alan".

Finally, once PET had entered the home, team members worked to maintain that contact. Doing so could be problematic, since patients often exercised physical and interactional autonomy of a sort severely restricted in office settings. Team members responded in several ways to this autonomy of movement. First, workers tried to preempt the possibilities of patient movement; for example, on entering, PET and the police maneuvered Tina into her bedroom, conducting most of their evaluation while standing in and essentially blocking the doorway. Second, workers took care to stay physically close to patients; they moved with Tina to the balcony door, the hall, and the living room. Similarly, when leaving to call an ambulance, one team member stayed in the apartment, assuring both continuing contact and reentry when necessary.

In sum, in offering "help" to a patient, PET sought to structure in-home interaction as a "therapeutic" encounter. But efforts to entice patients to cooperate often met with evasion, denial and resistance. Nonetheless workers persisted, seeking cues about patients' living situations and mental states, then circling back to again try to elicit cooperation.

4.2. Attending to Local Context

Entering home settings provided the PET with direct and detailed evidence of the patient's routine behaviors, daily life and mental condition. Workers drew heavily on two features of the observed home context—its material features and the relational contours of the patient's living situation.

Initially, team members might read the home setting itself—neighborhood, home furnishings, cleanliness, order, messiness, smells, etc.—as a coded text for what life in that household was like. Jo's neat and orderly apartment indicated a person able to move in and successfully set up a separate household. Tina's disorderly rooms evidenced troubled and disorganized living circumstances.

Coming into the home also gave the team direct access to the relational parameters of the patient's living situation. PET workers tended to encounter other participants in the household environment—parents, spouses, relatives, children, neighbors, landlords—and to attend to their relations with the patient. If family members in the home seemed genuinely concerned about the patient's welfare and had some sort of working relationship, team members could draw on this supportive tie to learn about recurring problems.

Being on the scene put PET workers into direct contact with a complainant pushing for an outcome—hospitalization—that was as yet undecided. Whereas in office encounters complainants had at least partially succeeded in their complaint (in that a psychiatrist had agreed to see the patient), callers to PET had to actively work to convince the team that hospitalization in these particular circumstances was necessary. To do so, complainants tended to elaborate and upgrade their initial accounts of troubling acts committed by the patient. PET workers' first encounter with the caller complaining about Tina Williams included an elaborated account not only of details of a number of seriously irrational actions by the patient, but also highlighted threats of violence.

In sum, being on the scene of reported troubles provided psychiatric workers with more detailed insights into the troubled situation than would be available in office encounters.

4.3. Doing Psychiatric Assessments in the Presence of Local Others

PET usually saw patients at home in the presence of their significant (and sometimes not so significant) others. For many purposes the presence of others offered useful resources—parties to fill in relevant background information, to pressure the patient to respond to workers' proposals, and to provide accounts of incidents the latter refused to acknowledge. But the presence of these others also meant that team members had to conduct exchanges with the patient that could be overheard and monitored by parties often not content to sit back and let them control the encounter. In these ways, home evalu-

ations could become multi-party events raising complex management problems.

Team members employed a variety of strategies to elicit the specifics of one person's trouble while being closely monitored by others with a stake in that trouble. Initially, workers made special effort to talk to callers and other concerned parties before making direct contact with the patient, as in both the cases considered here. Once in the presence of the patient, they might ask the caller to withdraw, or separate the parties. Or when others were present, team members might focus their attention and questions specifically on the patient, discouraging others from commenting on or intervening in these exchanges.

Relatedly, PET workers frequently relied on one-sided communications to manage the parties to the call. Thus, while after his first discussion with Jo, Art informed Mr. Sherman outside the apartment that he was going to arrange hospitalization for his wife, he kept this (tentative) decision from the patient. Conversely, staff might privately confer with and advise the patient not to convey potentially incendiary personal information to the caller, as in this instance:

> With her husband sent outside the apartment while she spoke with Art and Bea, Jo made a reference to her "boyfriends". Both team members were emphatic that that aspect of her life didn't concern [them] and that they wouldn't bring that up in front of her husband.

In managing such "secrets" workers expressed and tried to create alignment—however partial and temporary—with one or the other party.

In general, the problems arising from multiple parties were exacerbated when the team encountered in-house troubles marked by strong disagreement and heated opposition between the caller and the person called about. In these circumstances, workers had to give constant attention to managing these conflicting stances and demands.

4.4. Managing Different and Opposing Concerns

The presence of an active complainant on the scene increased the possibilities of encountering strongly opposing stances toward the problem. Having selected a call for home visit, team members had accorded tacit validity to the initial complaint; the situation as recounted by the caller merited at least first-hand evaluation (Emerson, 2015, pp. 234–235). Thus, in both the cases we are considering, evaluators came to the situation pre-aligned with the caller, having accepted the general contours of the problem as reported by the complainant and as initially confirmed at the site.

Calling in the police to support home entry reinforced pre-alignment with the complainant and often escalated the possibility of patient resistance. While Rogers had

insisted that that the police be present as a condition for his going out on the Tina Williams call, most workers were extremely reluctant to do so, fearing that police presence might destroy any possibility of developing trust with the patient.

Once on the scene, team members often approached the patient in ways that reflected this pre-alignment, as in Rogers' first questions to Tina seeking to test her psychological orientation. And PET might sustain this alignment with the caller throughout the evaluation, even in the face of persistent counter-claims from the patient. Furthermore, throughout the encounter both team members continued to urge Tina to go to the mental hospital, disregarding her pleas that she was being threatened by Alan and his wife, was not crazy, and did not want to go to "jail". The psychiatrist pushed hospitalization not by challenging Tina's claims of having been victimized by Alan and his wife, but by using her "paranoid" beliefs to argue that hospitalization was a solution that would allow her to get away from Alan and his threats. Thus, despite Tina's insistence right from the start that the apartment manager had called because of personal ill-will, Rogers held steadily to courses of inquiry and action that presumed her mental instability.

In other situations, sensitive to signs of hostility between family members and the proposed patient, workers might begin to take actions that signaled a shift from alignment with the caller. As home evaluations unfolded, the direction of team members' questions could reveal staff's emerging take on the situation and their preferred line of response. Thus, Art's interest in talking to Jo's apartment manager and landlord, and his positive reaction to favorable reports about her behavior from these local sources, signaled a shift in alignment made explicit when he abandoned any attempt to use a phone to call an ambulance. But indications of such a shift in alignment could elicit vigorous protest by the caller. Workers were well aware of this possibility and tried to anticipate and minimize likely objections from complainants.

In sum, conducting psychological evaluations in the home often confronted psychiatric teams directly with two parties with strongly opposed claims about what was going on and what should be done about it. Workers could take up different alignments between these parties, but always had to anticipate and attempt to manage the reactions their observable actions were likely to elicit.

4.5. Assessing Symptoms and Tenability In-Situ

PET weighed two considerations in evaluating patients for hospitalization: the severity of the patients' mental disturbance, and the tenability of patients' living situations. The tension between these concerns arose in part from the LPS legislation that authorized involuntary hospitalization only when mental illness affected a person's actual living circumstances, creating danger to self or danger to others. While workers characterized many pa-

tients as mentally ill, they could still conclude that they were "not LPS" and hence should not be hospitalized. Indeed, on occasion some viewed some patients as "really crazy" but nonetheless functioning in circumstances that were sufficiently manageable to avoid hospitalization (Emerson, 1989).

Encountering patients in their own homes allowed PET to witness directly variations in symptomatic behavior and the stability of living conditions. With regard to the former, in the home, fieldworkers could observe the patient interacting in vivo with a wider range of others than would have been seen in office settings. With both Tina Williams and Jo Sherman, team members drew on observations of naturally occurring interactions between the patient and others to come to nuanced assessments of mental condition—hallucinatory and paranoid, yes, but in relationally specific and thus distinctly occasioned ways. Jo Sherman was classically paranoid in her denunciation of her husband—"He's a dupe, a dope addict, a ring leader of the communists, trying to kill me!"— but she talked calmly and generally coherently about her current situation. Later her landlords' favorable reports on their encounters with her reinforced the team's sense that her delusional behavior was tied centrally to her relations with her husband.

Workers were also in position to make direct assessments of the manageability of patients' living situations. On the one hand, going into the home led staff to draw very different conclusions from Tina's disordered rooms as opposed to Jo's sparse but orderly living area. On the other hand, reports from family members, neighbors and landlords could fundamentally shape their sense of the tenability of patients' living situations. Encounters with these others were often opportunistic: Art decided to drop in on the apartment manager in part as a practical convenience—to avoid delay and uncertainty in having to walk down to the corner to find a pay phone to call an ambulance. But he immediately picked up her favorable attitude toward a woman who moments earlier had been screaming wildly paranoid accusations.

In sum, these features of psychiatric homework— uncertain physical and therapeutic access to the patient, encountering the patient within a distinctive local context, often with family and others in attendance, managing the sometimes conflicting demands of these parties while at the same time having to weigh the salience of both psychiatric symptomology and practical living circumstances—introduced wide variation and uncertainty into these psychiatric evaluations. These uncertainties could lead to distinctively unpredictable, emotionally and physically wild exchanges.

5. Wildness in the Psychiatric Homework

Several features made PET interventions in the homes of those identified as psychiatric problems highly unpredictable, fluid and volatile. First, right from knocking on the door, workers could not predict what would happen

when they confronted the person called about; indeed, most of these persons first learned that they were candidate patients facing possible hospitalization at this moment. As a result, home evaluations could immediately become hostile, messy and explosive.

Second, conducting psychiatric evaluations in home settings led to direct and often emotionally confrontational encounters between complainants and proposed patients. As noted, often both parties were on the scene and urgently insistent that the team recognize their concerns and take action on their behalf. These face-to-face confrontations could become heated and ugly.

Third, PET's decisions on outcome were fluid and yet ultimately observable by both parties. At the point persons realized they were being hospitalized despite their objections they might respond angrily. Or the complainant might explode on realizing that the team was not going to hospitalize the proposed patient, as when, Mr. Sherman learned that Art was going to leave Jo in her home:

> Mr. S objects and becomes progressively more angry, mentioning how he is stuck at home left to watch the children. At one point he argues: "I'm afraid if she stays in the apartment that she will kill herself. She should go, I'm telling you, for her own good". Art reasserted the plan: "Well, we want to try it this way first. If we can get her to take her medicine, we think that will do it". Mr. S responded: "Well, if she does kill herself then it's gonna be your responsibility…not mine". Art: "Yeah, that's the way it will be. It's our decision".

Emergent shifts in alignment could not only change the anticipated hospitalization outcome but could also transform workers' understandings of the moral character of the parties involved. For example, in deciding not to hospitalize Jo Sherman, Art not only legitimized her insistence that she was separating from her husband, but also recast her husband's pressure to hospitalize as an exploitative demand by an overly controlling spouse. Jo's report after her husband left that he had a gun in his car confirmed this emerging appraisal of his anger and potential for violence.

In contrast, in other cases, PET validated the initial claims of callers, dismissing the legitimacy of counterclaims. With Tina Williams, the team remained aligned with the complainant, giving no credence to her alternative version of the apartment manager's actions. Hospitalization on a short-term basis was seen as the appropriate and necessary response to a patient with a serious psychological disturbance living in highly combustible circumstances.

6. Conclusion

In her classic research on life-and-death decisions in intensive care units for newborn infants, Anspach (1987,

p. 229) emphasized that different staff work practices produced distinctly different "ecologies of knowledge" of these cases and their likely outcomes. She showed how physicians and nurses develop conflicting conceptions of the future of the infants.

> [R]esidents, whose contact with infants is limited and technologically focused, base their prognostic assessments largely on 'hard' data, acquired by means of sophisticated measurement instruments (technological cues)….[Nurses], unlike the physicians, sustain continuous contact with infants and derive much of their work satisfaction from interaction with infants who are medically and socially responsive (interactive cues).

In these ways, routine work experiences in diagnosis and care made salient different aspects and dimensions of these infants. While in many cases interactive contacts led nurses to hold more optimistic prognoses than physicians, they were more pessimistic with infants "who are unresponsive, pose behavioral problems, or require chronic care" (Anspach, 1987, p. 229).

Similarly, we suggest that PET's homework practices gave rise to distinctive working ecologies of knowledge that differ significantly from those that mark psychiatric decision-making based in office settings. In the following we draw upon this analysis of PET home practices to identify features of field-based ecologies of knowledge more broadly. In so doing we will also consider how these practices suggest contrasting but often taken-for-granted features of office- and institution-based frontline decision-making.

6.1. Clientization on the Spot

Decision-makers in a variety of other field and home situations regularly encounter problematic attitudes and open resistance from those whose fates are being decided; as a result, intervention often centers on negotiating some degree of basic cooperation from the proposed client.

In contrast, clients or patients coming to an office setting thereby display at least some initial willingness to cooperate with frontline staff. By the time such an individual arrives at the hospital or clinic and despite whatever feelings of anger and frustration he may have with regard to his plight, he has been exposed to the fact that others feel he is in need of psychiatric care.

In this sense the psychiatric encounter within the office or institution occurs at the end of a chain of interactional pre-processing which at the very least alerts individuals to their status as someone subject to psychiatric scrutiny (Goffman, 1961). Similar pre-processing marks many other frontline office encounters, including those occurring in ERs, medical clinics, welfare offices, office-based probation and parole supervision, and criminal and civil courts.

6.2. Using and Managing Local Material and Interpersonal Environments

When social control agents enter a home, they often rely on what they observed of the material and interpersonal environments of candidate patients (Ferguson, 2018). They may note the state of the property and its furnishings, of occupants' clothing and self-care. They may also observe the relationships between various parties.

In contrast, office-based frontline workers have no direct access to relevant local environments, instead basing assessments heavily upon in-office talk and demeanor and upon written records and reports. In general, then, lack of first-hand contact with clients' actual life circumstances in office-based frontline encounters will lead to elaborate interpretive practices for making inferences from institutionally-occasioned talk, appearance and demeanor, from the informal reports of complainants and involved others, and from a variety of official records and evaluations.

6.3. Decision-Making in the Presence of Local Others

In field and home settings frontline decision-making is observed not just by "established members of [the] work organization" (Goffman, 1961, p. 324), but also by local and/or outside others. Workers making such publicly observable decisions experience distinctive interactional and management problems; indeed, "the problem of facing the public and of controlling it is sufficiently central to merit treating together all who experience it" (Goffman, 1961, p. 324). In open public settings like the streets, frontline decision-making may attract large audiences. Anticipating and dealing with such audiences is a central concern in both ambulance and police work (Metz, 1981, pp. 144–154; Moskos, 2008). Similarly, a variety of local parties, particularly family members, routinely observed many PET home evaluations.

In contrast, frontline work in office and institutional settings relies on a variety of procedures to limit the access and control the behavior both of the general public and of those directly involved with the client and his/her troubles. Individual appointments, rules about privacy and confidentiality, worker control of office space and of the movement of clients and outsiders, and the ability to put off decisions until some later occasion, allow many actions to be taken behind closed doors and communicated to outside audiences in controlled and limited ways.

6.4. Encountering Strongly Expressed, Conflicting Demands

Going into field and home settings may confront frontline workers with parties with strongly opposed claims about what should be done. Indeed, trouble in homes and on the streets leading to outside intervention may be particularly "hot", involving parties consumed by outrage, festering anger, and longstanding grudges. Frontline workers can of course take up different alignments between these parties, coming to side with one or another, or trying to establish some sort of balance between their positions. But they always have to be aware of and attempt to manage these competing demands.

In contrast, office settings provide a variety of resources to separate and defuse conflicting parties. Complainants may not need to be physically present for many instances, as in mental hospital wards and residential treatment programs; opposed parties may be seen privately or sequentially, and direct confrontations may be muted or avoided altogether with the involvement of attorneys or spokespersons; in court proceedings and mediation sessions, direct exchanges between opposing parties may be closely monitored and supervised.

6.5. Reacting to Unpredictable, Emergent Situational Contingencies

Decision-making in office and institutional settings is relatively constrained. Hierarchical supervision tends to be immediate, and unexpected, non-routine exchanges are organizationally visible. The weight of "like cases" and accountable precedents loom large. The salience of local contingencies is restricted, and the range of remedial possibilities is conventionalized.

In contrast, going into indigenous settings confronts fieldworkers with a wide array of contingencies and uncertainties. Indeed, field encounters and home visits provide and demand skillful practice relying on "creativity, craft and improvisation" in order to manage interactions with clients and their families (Ferguson, 2018, p. 67).

Field decision-making is often highly contingent upon specific contexts and unique circumstances. Being on the scene and directly encountering the unique features of local situations promotes fieldworker sensitivities to practical, pragmatic responses, reducing the relevance of formal, rule-based actions. Broad discretion and limited effective supervision allow fieldworkers take matters into their own hands to respond in grounded but sometimes unorthodox ways that take into account immediate circumstances and real concerns. Moreover, such decision-making can take on a subtle, self-consciously recursive character, with fieldworkers becoming particularly sensitive to what others do in response to their presence, overtures, and suggestions, thereby elaborating their sense of what *could* be done or what might *have* to be done.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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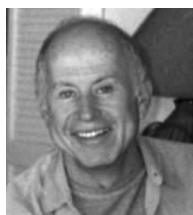
Melvin Pollner (1940–2007) was Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. His research employed both ethnomethodological and ethnographic approaches to analyze taken-for-granted processes of social life. In *Mundane Reason* (1987) and other writings, he examined how everyday reality—the ordinarily unquestioned conviction of "an 'out there', 'public' or 'objective' world"—is produced and sustained in ordinary interaction.

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