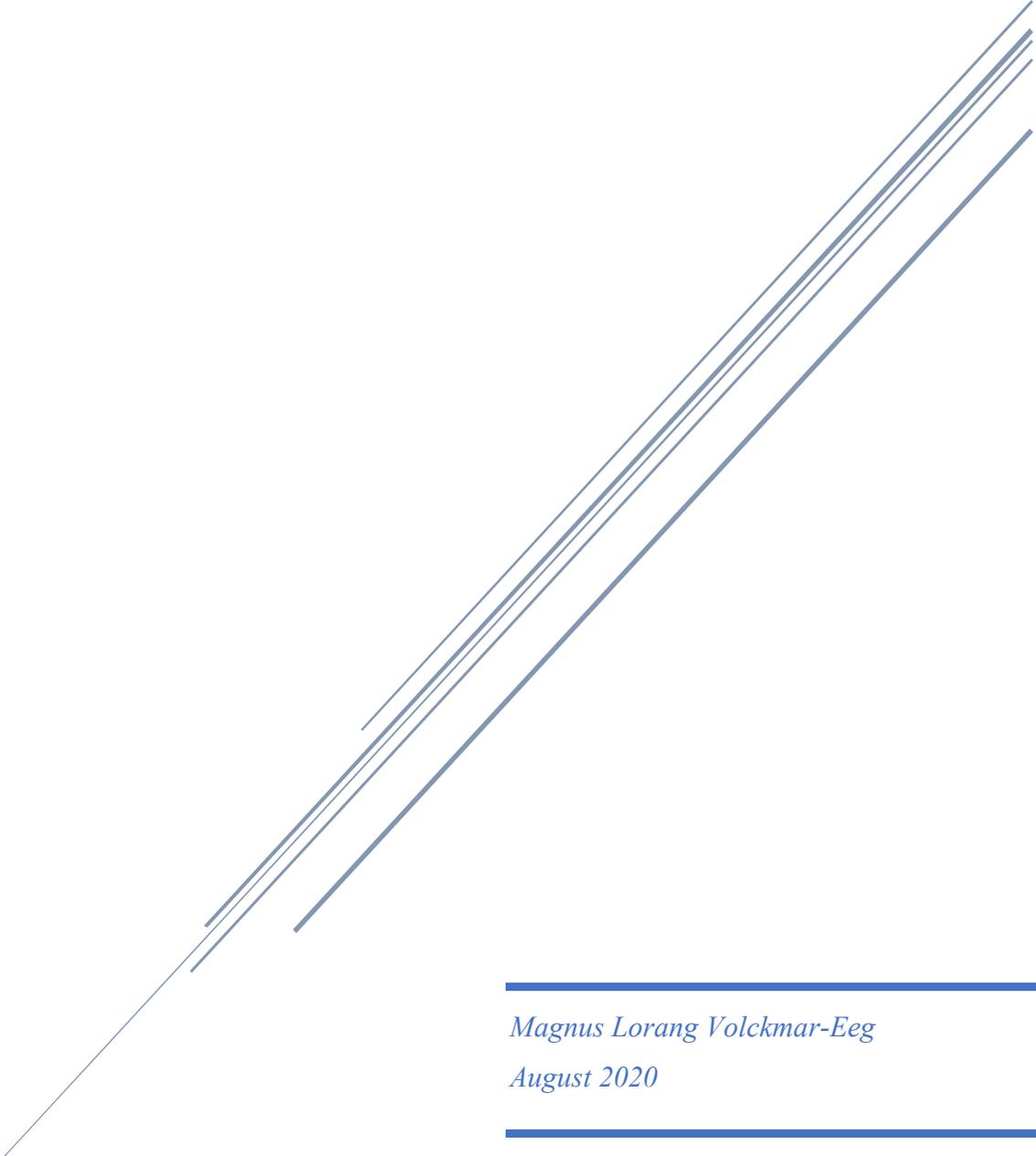# PREPARING TO SHOW UP

A master thesis exploring the preparational work young welfare clients do in order to meet the perceived expectations of the Norwegian welfare apparatus

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Abstract

The point of departure for this master thesis is a widespread assumption that young welfare clients do not prepare for meetings. The extensive efforts professionals do to prepare and improve practices, might indicate this assumption. What is at stake for this research is an establishment that welfare workers are those who initiate for progress in service users' processes, leaving service users to be regarded as passive recipients of welfare services. There is a need to raise awareness of their everyday lives and their day-to-day actions seen in relation to their contact with the welfare apparatus. The goal is to develop more adequate collaborations between service users and welfare workers and exploring whether or not social services are living up to their functions and mandates.

I explore these taken-for-granted assumptions through interviews with six youth who have had contact with a variety of institutions in the welfare apparatus. I use tools and insights from institutional ethnography with a focus on work and work knowledge. Work is a broad and generous term which relates to people's actions, what they *actually* do that takes time and effort in their daily lives. Work knowledge refers to what people say and know about their own work. The implications of using this perspective is to make service users active agents with knowledge of their own work in social relations with different welfare institutions.

The research questions driving the project are: *How do young welfare clients prepare themselves for meetings with institutions within the Norwegian welfare apparatus? What kind of 'preparational work' do they do?*

The findings show that contrary to the widespread assumptions, the youth do a lot to prepare for the meetings. The youth prepare to show up to meetings as much as they prepare for the actual content of the meeting. They often battle anxiety and stress in preparing for meetings with bureaucratic systems where institutionalized expectations prevails. The youth need less preparing when they meet professionals in institutions using outreach work. These institutions are seen as more accommodating and working on the youths' behalf. Consequently, the preparations can differ according to the institutions they are meeting and what function and mandate they serve in the context of the welfare apparatus. The preparations can be divided into three types of work; practical, emotional, and preparing to deal with inner resistance.

The analysis points to how the youth feel they need to present themselves in the social relations they take part in. Using the work of Erwing Goffman and literature on welfare politics, the findings lead into a discussion about the ideology of being a 'good' or active

client in the welfare apparatus and what type of role the youth feel the need to put on. Being a good or active client is discussed against the institutional expectations and how these expectations affects the youths' everyday lives in preparing for meetings.

These findings have implications for practice in that preparations might be used as something to be discussed in meetings. Both welfare workers and service users can benefit from initiating conversations around how institutional practices affects their lives. Addressing these issues can raise awareness to potential stress and unwanted reactions to what is supposed to be helping service users' lives.

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Chapter One – Introduction

Setting the scene

This thesis is about young welfare clients and their preparations before a meeting with the Norwegian welfare apparatus. Meetings, especially in bureaucratic systems, are an integral part of service user follow-up. They are a necessity, usually regarding assessments and evaluations of process oriented matters. In order to be eligible for services and benefits, service users are expected to meet with workers to assess needs and plan processes going forward. In a welfare context, service users' 'job', if they are not in regular employment, is often prescribed by institutional expectations. The aim of most welfare institutions is to have processes in motion at all times. The activities are meant to be meaningful, effective, and productive to service users' progress of gaining employment or to improve their health situation. These activities often entail applying for employment, seeking psychiatric or somatic treatment, learning work skills and so forth. If everyday life and 'normal' activities like grocery shopping, morning routines or driving to work are emphasized as important, they can be discussed up against the activities that are prescribed by welfare institutions. What needs our attention is to view activities as not 'right' or 'wrong' in the daily life of service users, but how those activities are seen in context of the social relations with welfare institutions.

In the field of social work there is much focus on improving practice and methods through the use of: motivational techniques (Barth et al., 2001), empowering service users (Andersen, 2018; Askheim & Starrin, 2008) or understanding resistance to help that is given (Solberg, 2011). It would seem that this effort to improve *our* (the welfare workers) ways of working could indicate that the service users themselves do not prepare to meet the welfare apparatus. Despite our efforts, the service users' process often comes to a halt, stops completely or lack in the first place. This leaves us wondering why, when the process is ongoing, and the service user might seem onboard with what is discussed and agreed upon in the meetings.

What is at stake is the assumption that welfare workers are those who initiate and always are in charge for progress in service users' processes. In that sense, there is a risk that service users are described as passive recipients of services; a one dimensional image of the people behind the unemployment, illness, or whatever challenge they face in their everyday life. The consequence of these assumptions can be a development of inadequate collaboration between service users and welfare workers. It is important to keep in mind these intricacies in context

of the social relation and interaction that is engaged in between welfare worker and service user.

Research question

In order to move beyond research that begin and end in theory, the institutional ethnographer begin with a 'problematic' (Kearney et al., 2019, p. 19). The researcher creates the 'problematic' (Smith, 2005) from actual lived experiences, in this case from young welfare clients. The Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (2005) represents a school of research that takes the standpoint of people as generally social, but also taking into consideration how their everyday actions (their work) can be seen in relation to institutional practices (ruling relations). Institutional ethnography (IE) builds on the notion of "the social" as a coordination of people's awareness and activities (Smith, 2005, p. 57 – 60). Our thoughts and actions are coordinated with other people's thoughts and actions, and this coordination cannot be substantiated with theory, but has to be studies and made explicit through empirical data (Smith, 1999). Thus, we have to *explore* people's actual doings rather than look for answers in the theoretical.

The problematic leading this research stems from two areas: the reflections I do upon my own practice as a social worker and my informants' experiences of being in contact with the welfare apparatus. In institutional ethnography, a problematic is described to direct our attention to 'a possible set of questions,' tensions, or puzzles that are 'latent' in, yet arise from, people's everyday actualities (Smith, 1987; in Kearney et al., 2019, p. 19). Problems that affects peoples' everyday lives and actions are the starting point for what we can research and interpret and supports the gap between the social as written and the social as lived and experienced (Smith, 2005; in Widerberg, 2015, p. 315). The problematic had to be unraveled continuously throughout the project. In that way, the research process has followed the construction of the problematic in the actual everyday and not through a meticulous plan that had been defined before the research started (Campbell & Gregor 2004, p. 56).

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the everyday doings of young welfare clients in the time before they attend a meeting in the welfare apparatus. It is what they *actually* do before a meeting takes place that lies at the core. It is important to research because it can enable us to see how institutional logics and practices reach into and *rules* service users' daily lives. There is also a need to explore service users' everyday lives and their preparations to understand the

relational aspect and for making better collaborations between workers and service users as mentioned above.

The research questions for the project are:

> *How do young welfare clients prepare themselves for meetings with institutions within the Norwegian welfare apparatus? What kind of 'preparational work' do they do?*

To answer the research question, I have interviewed six young welfare clients about their daily work in the time before going to a meeting. I use perspectives from institutional ethnography (Smith, 2005) as a theoretical framework and analytical tool.

For the purpose of this research, 'preparations' is not used as a technical term. The focus is to understand the work that the youth do in relation to the institutions they are in contact with, therefore I will not provide a strict definition of the term preparations. Preparations in the context of this project is the youths' actions, what they do before a meeting. What emerges from this exploration of their work will be used to link that work to institutionalized ruling relations. In essence, it is not preparations as a term itself that is important; defining it will not help us understand how ruling relations impacts service users lives. That must be discovered empirically (Widerberg, 2015).

Relevance for social work

Doing this research, through the lens of institutional ethnography, creates a cohesive understanding of what young welfare clients actually use their time on before going to a meeting. Understanding their everyday lives from their own perspective is relevant for everyone working in social work professions and challenges assumptions and misperceptions that might exist or appear in a worker – client collaboration.

If we want to improve effectiveness of social work practice and methods, we have to better understand how the services reach into the lives of the people that it aims to help. As Campbell and Gregor (2004) describe it, "the inquiry would attempt to uncover, explore, and describe how people's everyday lives may be organized without their explicit awareness but still with their active involvement" (p. 43). Service users' dissatisfaction with welfare services are, according to Dewe and Otto (1998) commonly found in the gap between "generalized solutions to problems offered by the helping professions and the practical life perspectives of

clients (Seibel, 1992; in Dewe & Otto, 1998, p. 271). I will address this gap with analytical tools from institutional ethnography. Institutional ethnography on its own offers a step outside of the individualistic perspective, pointing the scope to the social relation between two parties (youth – welfare worker). By making the youths' actions visible through exploration, where their work and knowledge of their work is in the forefront, gains ground for exploring ruling relations on a local to trans-local level and the impacts on their daily lives. It is the researcher's job to clarify the link that ties people's *actual* actions to institutional practices and social relations they are a part of. Then both practitioners *and* youth can be more knowledgeable about the implications for their everyday lives.

Overview of the thesis and terminology

Chapter one introduced the theme, research question and relevance of the thesis to the field of social work. Chapter two will contain a brief overview of the Norwegian welfare state and previous research on youths' experiences with welfare systems. In chapter three I will go more in-depth of IE as a theoretical framework for this project and Goffman's (1959) theory on social interactionism and acting out roles in interaction with other people. Chapter four describes the methodology, more specific the methodological process of recruiting informants, conducting interviews and the process of data management. I will present my findings in chapter five. I will present the work that my informants do in different ways before a meeting in the welfare apparatus. Moving on to discussing these findings in relation to the concepts of ruling relations and expectations in chapter six. Lastly, I will share my thoughts on future research and overall concluding remarks on the project and its outcome.

The welfare state and its institutions are commonly described as a welfare system, consisting of different institutions. Following the vocabulary of IE, I use the term apparatus. Given the interrelated mass of institutions that the welfare state consists of, an apparatus is a term which provide a frame of reference that makes it possible to look for the characteristics of a specific trait. The special trait in this project is the meetings between the welfare professionals and the service users.

The term 'social worker' generally describes people working as social workers, child protection officers or caseworkers (Kjønstad et al., 2008, p. 28). In the text I will generalize the reference to people working within the welfare apparatus as *welfare workers*. Being

people who work within the various institutions this term can work as a common description of street level workers such as social workers, caseworkers, doctors, or psychiatrists.

As for the young people in my study I will refer to them as young welfare clients and youth. The terms will be used interchangeably throughout the text, but all refer to the informants I have spoken to.

Chapter Two – The Welfare state and young welfare clients

This chapter serves to give an overview of previous research on the meeting between the welfare state and young welfare clients. Rather than providing a full review to the full scope of the institutions that the Norwegian welfare apparatus consist of, this section should be read as background information. The purpose is to bring attention to relevant parts of the welfare apparatus and literature on the field of young welfare clients and preparations. The following is an outline of the Norwegian welfare state as well as a review of studies and articles I have found to be relevant to the project. Articles for the literature review have been found using: SocIndex, Academic search premier, google scholar, Idunn, and Fontene forskning. Idunn and Fontene forskning have mainly been used to explore existing Scandinavian research and the rest for international research. When doing the searches, I used a combination of the following search words: social sciences, meetings, welfare apparatus, preparation, youth, young welfare clients, outreach work, social work, resistance, participation, involvement, social services, welfare services, front-line services, street-level services, coping strategies, emotional work and preparational work.

Further follows an outline of the Norwegian welfare state, focusing on the welfare model and the Norwegian labor and welfare administration (NAV) as provider of services and benefits. A focus on the meeting between the welfare apparatus and youth seen from both perspectives will follow after.

An outline of The Norwegian welfare state, NAV and Uteseksjonen

In order to understand how the state takes care of people experiencing sickness and unemployment, a description of welfare is needed.

According to Anvik and authors (2020) welfare, as a general term, is associated with safety and network, especially in the Nordic countries. In the Norwegian welfare state, there is a general census among all political parties that building a strong welfare state with benefits to provide economic security and redistribution for its inhabitants are key components. Thus, the government uses its resources on generous financial benefits and services for those who face unemployment or health challenges.

The welfare model, or the concept of a 'Scandinavian model' was outlined by Esping-Andersen (1990) within the 'democratic welfare regime'. Being on the social-democratic

spectrum of Esping-Andersen's welfare model, hallmarks are addressed as egalitarian values, unity, cooperation, equal distribution of economic resources, low poverty rates and generally a high standard of living, to mention a few (Hvinden, 2009). In other words, no citizen of the democratic welfare society, including the young people affected by illness or unemployment, should be left without financial resources or social support. According to Kildal (2013), the welfare state is characterized by social politics service benefits and services organized by public legislation, that those rights are of universal nature, in addition to a strong work orientation (p. 88). A strong work orientation is also known as the 'work line' in Norwegian welfare terms. It has been a basic value in the Norwegian welfare policy (Solberg, 2014). At the core lies an expectation that disabled people should work instead of passively receive benefits and work has thus been viewed as the passage to improving living conditions and quality of life (Solberg, 2014).

Providing most of the financial benefits and services to facilitate work inclusion is The Norwegian labor and welfare administration (NAV). NAV is a decentralized and complex system with autonomous front-line offices that answer to the directorate of labor and welfare. It is an integrated system that merge the services of employment services, the national insurance office, and the social security office into one unified organization. The organization has a particular mandatory partnership between state and local authorities (Fimreite & Hagen, 2009). Services are constructed to encourage participation in the labor force, together with generous economic benefits (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011). The facilitation is often done by referring service users to outsourced companies that work on behalf of NAV in helping people gain or regain access to employment. Objective and neutral professionality is regarded as key elements in many of NAVs work environments (Fossestøl, 2012, p. 292).

NAV is characterized as a bureaucratic system with substantial regulations by law, specialized and standardized work processes, one of which is how they communicate with their service users. The contact is generally of formal character, performed by phone calls, emails or letters. In addition, NAV has their own IT-platform where they have a system for managing applications for benefits, individual process plans and a communication site where the service users and caseworkers can communicate both ways. This is the centrality for most of their communication and serves as a tool for efficiency and overview of cases.

NAV is one of the main actors in the young welfare clients' lives. But other organizations, such as Uteseksjonen prevail the young welfare clients lives in a different fashion. They are providing services through the use of outreach work as their main method of support for

young people. The goal is to approach vulnerable youth where the youth themselves are located, and their function serve as an important addition to the rest of the institutions in the welfare apparatus that are stationary without the possibly of going out to reach those who need help.

The meeting between the welfare apparatus and young welfare clients

Meetings from the institutions point of view

As stated initially, social work practitioners do extensive work to increase their chances of giving help to those who need it. Contrary to the description of NAV and bureaucratic service provision is the method of outreach work. Methodologically doing outreach work is contrasting to stationary service provision because the professionals tries to reach service users who might not otherwise come voluntarily to seek help and have the time and access to do so.

According to Oldeide, Fosse and Holsen (2020) the aim of outreach methods are to "work with those who have an increased chance of developing problems" and "a need to protect vulnerable youth from drug problems or something else, such as mental illness or loneliness" (p. 4). Outreach social workers who were interviewed in their study emphasize "providing youth with resources, such as employment training courses, and recreational activities, such as going to the cinema, bowling or eating at restaurants" (p. 4). As such, outreach social workers are more flexible with a broad mandate and resource perspective than that of NAV.

The professionals working in the field of outreach work must give much of themselves, because the premise for the work is the youth, and not the benefits or services that they must be eligible to get. Björn Andersson's (2013) "ways to the hard to reach", is a discussion of central elements and characteristics of outreach work. He draws out how it has been central to the social work profession since the start, and that building social service offices was not (p. 172). He found, amongst other things, that "outreach workers are repeatedly asking for a more solid professional basis to build their work upon", and that they at the same time "are seemingly reluctant to apply structured methods in their work, and rather tend to give prominence to flexible interventions and personal engagement" (p. 174). In this regard, outreach work has a clear position in the field of social work methods and are characterized as flexible in the contact with service users with a high degree of commitment of welfare

workers. As he sums up, "engagement and respect are stressed as important professional qualities" (p. 171).

Even though applying outreach work methods increases the chance of getting in touch with those at risk for developing problems of various kind, Henningsen, Gotaas and Feiring (2008) discuss how the professionals can cope with meeting "difficult" youth. Their book, *Meetings with youth in the front-line services of the welfare state,* problematizes important aspects of outreach social work, such as the social workers getting in position to help the young people, being a low-threshold offer, being where the youth gather in their daily lives, and having activities for the youth to participate in, among others. The last point shows how all parts of social work practices can have both positive sides, but also difficulties when trying to help people in tough life situations.

The youth's experiences with meeting welfare services

The studies referred to in this sequence points to youth being in the forefront of experiences with welfare services. What they think of the collaboration with various welfare workers is relevant to the topic of this thesis because it links to institutional functions and ways of approaching youth. As I have found, research on youths' experiences with the Norwegian welfare system includes studies of separate areas, for example experiences with Uteseksjonen or NAV, but no study that merges those experience. Studies conducted in Norway are also limited, making this thesis a contribution to the field of Norwegian social work and youths' experiences.

In their study of collaboration between young service users and institutions doing outreach work, Soggiu and authors (2020) found that youth need a good relationship with social workers, a friend of sorts. The authors conclude their study saying,

> *when talking about their collaboration experiences, young people want close, personal relationships; in other words, friends. Thus, it is a challenge that, in the mental health services field, what is considered professional excludes these aspects of the relationship; in fact, to some extent, a personal relationship is considered quite the opposite, as unprofessional* (Soggiu et al., 2020, p. 394).

Another aspect of social work practices and methods to help vulnerable youth, is youth-initiated mentoring programs (YIM). When looking into what makes young people satisfied with the follow-up they receive and meeting 'the system', working from the premise of the youth themselves is empowering. Spencer and authors (2019) found in their study of YIM that

youth who could recruit and select their mentors themselves often did so from schools or social services. Selecting who *they* wanted, gravitated the development of relationships between youth and mentors based on trust and closeness. As their findings show,

> *knowing that mentors would be nonjudgmental, trustworthy, and dedicated appeared to facilitate positive relationship development, which is important given the difficulty of engaging and serving system-involved youth in mentoring programs* (Spencer et al., 2019, p. 4).

Having a relationship with their mentors that were based on these qualities could result in youth having an easier time involving with the system and its requirements.

Using tools and ideas from institutional ethnography, Åsheim (2018) has researched young people's experiences with long-term work assessment processes. Her article addresses young people with mental disorders who go through NAVs line of services with the goal being paid employment. How institutional conditions affect how the young people cope with their situation is at the center. Her findings include that being in assessment processes is stressful to the youth and unpredictable. 'Trying everything out' is a central component to NAVs work method. Making sure that the system has been through the works ensures that those who receive long term disability benefits are actually eligible for them. The article concludes that the combination of the time consuming assessment-process and the experience of unpredictability has negative consequences for the young people's everyday life and coping (Åsheim, 2018).

Munford and Sanders (2017) draw on one of New Zealand's longitudinal studies concerning vulnerable young people's transition to adulthood. Through qualitative interviews they studied these young people's experiences with services, key transitions, coping capacities and resources used to mitigate effects of harmful events and environments. Understanding the youth's resistance in service encounters lie at the core of the research. The conclusion led to indication that when practitioners perceived young people's resistance as a resource in helping relationships, worked positively with this resistance. Developed meaningful relationships with young people, it was likely that they could extend the resources, networks, and opportunities for these young people. Having enough time, was drawn out as essential to build strong connections and trusting relationships that would help understand the nature of the young people's resistance to support. Resistance is one of the coping strategies they found that they may use to keep safe and to 'test' relationships with others.

The literature search resulted in research that has relevance to my project in the way that they all portray different aspects of youth and welfare workers collaboration. However, none of which takes the exact point of departure in young welfare clients' everyday lives with specific focus on their time before a meeting in the welfare apparatus. Seeing this review in regard to the institutions that prevail the youth's contact with the welfare apparatus, a distinction between bureaucracy and flexibility/engagement have been found. This research fits the appropriate knowledge discussion for the field of young welfare clients and the welfare apparatus in that it addresses a narrow part of the collaboration between youth and institutions. Young welfare client's preparations can therefore be further investigated to fit the research gap.

Chapter Three – Theoretical framework

Institutional ethnography as a new turn in sociology

Smith created institutional ethnography as a new perspective on sociology. She was critical to the traditional way of doing sociology, which she calls mainstream or standard sociology (Smith, 1988). As a proposed solution to this mainstream way of doing research she took the point of departure from her own life. Smith saw an urgency for a new way of researching women's needs and experiences. This was her initial critique to the mainstream sociology because, in her opinion, women had not been given a language, a discourse, to talk about their experiences from everyday life. Consequently, deriving from her own life as a feminist and contributor to feministic sociological theories. In the long run, IE has become a sociology, not only for women, but for all people (Smith, 2005, p. 1).

When establishing IE as a methodology, she started to look for what was missing in qualitative research and how knowledge was produced in relation to what kind of knowledge the world needed. IE is an explorative study, but at the same time is a method of approach and a *method of inquiry* (Smith, 2005). Being a method of inquiry, IE allows the researcher to turn to some of the basics in human life, the everyday experiences, and activities of people. The focus promotes change through gaining knowledge, not just *about* people, but *for* people (Widerberg, 2015).

Further, the aim is not to generalize from the experience of a group of people, but to describe generalizing social processes that affect them (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 18). In this lies the notion of being able to take a standpoint of curiosity through an inductive approach where experiences could drive the project initially, then applying theory to discuss ones' findings. Smith describes the process of inquiry as taking a ball of string and pulling one end to see where it takes you (Smith, 2005). As a researcher I do not have to have all the answers laid out, but I can start with the problematic and see where I end up in the exploration.

Building on a concept of the everyday world as important, Harold Garfinkel's school of empirical sociology got the name "ethnomethodology" (Aakvaag, 2008). The point of departure for ethnomethodology is to study how actors in an everyday and routinely interaction in a reflexive and competent way in fellowship produces a meaningful and orderly social world (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 83). According to Garfinkel, the everyday methods are so obvious implicit and routinely character, that we rarely think about them. The best way to research these taken-for-granted everyday actions is, by Garfinkel's interpretation, to breach

these everyday encounters in what he called "breaching experiments" (Aakvaag, 2008, p. 83). The point is to not only observe and interview people, but to go out into the field and carry out social provocations to challenge the implicit and routinely ways of doing things. In the same fashion, Smith wanted to take the standpoint of those who did not get heard. Starting with defending women's place in discourse, IE has been marked as a feminist, Marxist movement (Kearney et al., 2019).

Although building on the ethnomethodological work of Garfinkel, DeVault and McCoy (2006, p. 20) describes research with the use of IE as a three-part-process: first identify the experience, then the institutional processes that forms these experiences. Lastly, exploring the institutional processes to analytically explain how they affect the experiences. This is the process I have followed in applying institutional ethnography's tools and ideas for my project. I will now turn to look at key concepts from institutional ethnography. The concepts guide this project and acts as analytical tools when processing the data.

The social and understanding institutions

The ontological view of IE is an understanding of people as fundamentally social, born with a drive to interact (Widerberg, 2015). 'The social' is defined as people's coordinating of actions, consciousness, and experience (Smith, 2005, p. 57 – 60). The term 'social relations' is not referred to interpersonal relationships, but points to how different connections between areas of experiences are constructed. Said differently, the term is used to emphasize that people's activities are embedded in sequences of coordinated action (Smith 2005, p. 228).

The different areas of experiences are not necessarily connected between people who know each other or have communicated, as they would do in a social network, for example among friends or coworkers. An argument in IE is that these areas, or sites (Smith, 2005), are connected by people who are *not* aware of the others' existence, thus making them connected through routines, responsibilities, work obligations or the same thoughts. People who are placed in various positions in an institution, execute their activities following regulations and instructions developed somewhere else within the institutional structure (Smith, 2005).

Contemporary institutions, which is defined as (functional) complexes of activities organized around a distinctive function such as, youth work or labor market policies, activities are initiated and designed as a means to fulfil institutional functions (Smith, 2005). The functions can be health care, criminal care, education, or social services (Kearney et al., 2019). In this

project I do not explore *one* concrete institution in the welfare apparatus but try to find commonalities between a few that can be related to one another and their impact on young welfare clients' lives. Thus, the goal of IE is to unravel the connections and coordination of human enterprises in different places.

Recursivity, in institutional ethnography, shows patterns in the world. Something is organized to recur, and that is the organization that institutional ethnographers explore (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 69). It aims to go beyond what people know, to find out how their actions are connected with others' doings in ways they cannot see (Smith, 2005; in Kearney et al., 2019, p. 19). Institutional ethnography orients to exploring and explicating the social relations that organize that experience in the institutional setting or settings in which they exist. Individuals participate in these sites of interface often without knowing and unnoticeable from their own standpoint within the institutional complex where they are situated (Kearney et al., 2019). Integrated in the social relations are the local experiences in the broader institutional regimes (Smith, 2005). And peoples' participation and contribution in social relations helps maintain the institutions, institutional knowledge, resources, and purposes (Smith, 2005) through the texts which is found in rules, regulations, forms, procedures that precedes the institutional. Thus, these social relations that are called "social organization" is the actual everyday lives of the people we investigate.

Work is everything they do

The concept of work is one of the main concepts that guides this project. Work is often related to as paid labor, but in IE, it is a broad and generous term which relates to people's actions, what they *actually* do. Work is everything people do that demands time, effort, and emotions when they take part in the production, reproduction, or opposition against institutional practices (Smith, 2005, p. 187). Hence, work does not refer to formal processes or tasks but directs analytical attention to how and why people do what they do. Focusing on the peoples' actualities makes the informants *knowers* (Smith, 2005). People are aware of what they do, that is done under definite conditions and with whatever means and tools (Smith 2005, p. 151) and it is the researcher's responsibility to point it out and make people become aware of it. Waiting in line, making a prepared lunch for the day, or helping kids with homework are all examples of work that people do that can reflect institutional ruling. Institutional ruling is how their actions are controlled by the relation in which they interact with other people

(Widerberg, 2015). Thus, making the term work a broad one that can be linked to all the youths' activities before a meeting.

People are treated as competent carriers of knowledge of their own work (R. Lund & Magnussen, 2018, p. 275 – 276) or *work knowledge* according to Smith (2005, p. 145 – 163, 229). It is not what we can learn about people, but from them and how they understand their own work (Widerberg, 2015, p. 15). Meaning, what they do, why they do it, how they have learned to do it in addition to the thoughts and feelings that's at stake in the practice of the work and how it is socially coordinated (Lund & Magnussen, 2018, p. 276). In the case of interviewing and looking into what the informants are saying, I am looking for their type of work that is connected to what they *actually do* in their everyday before a meeting takes place. It is the taken for granted actions that are ruled by institutional practices I investigate. It is what they do, in the concrete that will further say something about their relation to the institutions and drawing it out in the bigger picture to find the ruling relations. The job of the researcher to unravel and point at through the research and analysis.

> *The concept of work as defined here helps to direct the ethnographer. It is a reminder to constantly return to the particularities of what people are or have been doing, to their thinking and feelings as well as to the circumstances, means, time, and other resources of that activity* (Smith 2005, p. 157).

In this sense, I return to the concept of work during the whole research process to keep focus on what people are doing and what their work means for their lives and social relations.

Ruling relations and institutionalized injustice

When Smith introduced the world to institutional ethnography as a new sociology in the late 1980s, it was with women and women's voice in mind. She starts her book, "the everyday world as problematic. A feminist sociology" (1988), sharing how women has been excluded from creation and input into the world, academically as well as culturally. In her opinion, the standpoint for sociology is that of men, and thus women's voices must be called attention to and the ruling relations of everyday lives highlighted. Men in society had a privilege that women could not reach for, and confronting this male bias became a catalyst for raising awareness to how other vulnerable groups in society are affected by invisible practices of power. It is this less visible exclusionary force (Smith, 1988, p. 25) I want to address when exploring young welfare clients' everyday experiences. The welfare apparatus has given its

attention to young people as a priority. Although there is great potential to explore how their involvement and experiences can be seen in relation to the powerful structures of professional control (Smith, 1988, p. 29). It is possible that they are being excluded from making decisions and forming their own lives. The making of accepted ways of thinking, our social form of consciousness. Being a part of an apparatus, which can be hard to understand and expectations, as shown above, are being forced upon them and their navigation through the bureaucratic jungle. Social relations are not viewed as chaotic, but as purposefully organized systematic processes and practices used to manage and control people's lives through ruling relations "more or less mysteriously and outside a person's knowledge" (Campbell & Gregor, 2004, p. 18).

It is not only professional control and institutionalized ruling that contribute with subtle practice of power in society. Smith points out that texts are a medium for execution of power. Texts are understood broadly as "texts, by words, numbers, and images on paper, in computers, or on TV and movie screens" (Smith, 1988, p. 17). In contemporary life, apps, direct messages, social media, and other screen-related platforms might be more common to address in this sense of ruling. Thus, power is an invisible force in which texts are the primary medium (though not the substance) of power (Smith, 1988, p. 17). Relating to today's follow-up of service users, institutions do this in a variety of ways. Some institutions prioritize the use of social media, apps, and smart phones to communicate with the youth in order to reach them. Communicating through apps and direct messaging can be more relatable for them. In this way, a local activity, such as the use of texts can be understood trans locally.

The translocal as a concept in institutional ethnography is derived from the understanding that no activity, regardless of its location in the present society, is distant from larger social and institutional arrangements, but is always coordinated from outside of the local space (Smith 1999, p. 80 – 92). Looking at the translocal relations through the navigable knowledge helps reveal *ruling relations* (Widerberg, 2015, p. 16) The term ruling relations points to the fact that there are characteristics in organizing of the modern capitalist society where objectification (Smith, 2005, p. 13) is an important hallmark. This means that we must look at how the everyday experiences of the people we research are objectified, not only focusing on the objectification of the overall executive and government (institutions).

> *The very aim of institutional ethnography is here not only to highlight*
> *'blind-spots' of welfare ruling but to investigate the taken for granted in the*
> *organization of everyday life so as to make alternative paths visible*
> (Widerberg, 2020, p. 21).

The concept of ruling relations describes in actuality power relations between individuals, on both local and translocal level (Wright & Rocco, 2007).

Counter-power practices

Until now, a focus on power practices from institutions and other mediums have been addressed. According to Anne Efskind (1984), *counter-power* is an active reaction to execution of power (p. 194). Counter-power often refers to collective action against oppression but can also be individual actions to prevent being used or oppressed. Though, these actions are not always that evident, they might be subtle steps and are done with trial and error.

The use of counter-power is more prevalent in societies where the power structures are more fixed. An 'open' form of state interventions, like the Scandinavian, might challenge the balance of state interventions and people's actions for counter-power. It might also increase the contrast of interest between state and the population. The use of counter-power practice could result in a spread of initiative of action steps which could transform powerless passivity into an obligation to act for one's own behalf. The result is liberation of resources (Efskind, 1984) and the empowerment movement is closely linked to this idea, only often initiated from social workers to service users. Thompson (1993) wrote that "[empowerment is] the process of giving power to clients in whatever way possible – resources, education, political and self-awareness and so on" (p. 32). Seeing it this way, empowerment is always about sharing power with people or transferring power to those that do not experience or possess much of it. To be empowered can help people use their resources to stand up for the relations of ruling.

Summing up this part, power and understanding power structures from a local and translocal level becomes critically important as an analytic focus to illuminate practices that marginalize others. In addition, to make visible how ruling relations are transported through knowledge, experience, discourse, and institutions are stressed as critical.

Social interactions and acting roles in everyday life

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed (Goffman, 1959, p. 1).

Erwin Goffman's book, "The presentation of self in everyday life" (1959) sets the premises for theories of how we can learn to understand interactions with others and institutionalized social life. Goffman's (1959) perspective of social interaction is that individuals will try to control or guide the impression that the other might have or make of him or her. The way they do that is by changing or fixing their appearance, manners and/or surroundings. All parties in a social interaction employs these practices. The surroundings are known as 'settings' in which relates to Goffman's front-stage/back-stage/off-stage analogy of a theatre play. The analogy is a connection between how people act in their daily life and that of an actor putting on different roles. Part of the goal is to avoid being embarrassed or to embarrass others. Being front-stage refers to the type of enactment that people do (changing appearance and manners) to fit the specific setting their in. This is the type of behaviour people put on when others are watching, in an "open setting", for example when going to the store or having a meeting. The aim of the actors is to be perceived one way or another. Therefor they must prepare the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959). In the 'back-stage', people rehearse their practices of desired behaviour for their front-stage performance. When the people who need help dealing with social, financial or health related challenges become users of welfare services, they are drawn into a complex welfare apparatus. In the apparatus, expectations of what they need to do, how to behave and what type of responsibility they need to take, succeeds the 'normal' of everyday life (Åsheim, 2018). Understanding how one relates to other people and the intricate work is being undertaken can give a frame to the expectations that service users meet and how they can alter how they are perceived.

They will want to prepare their presentation of themselves, to be perceived as a 'good client' in the eyes of the social workers. This might be done handling one's emotions to prevent outbursts in the meeting, plan what to wear or planning what to say. All these things are done to seem like they are taking an active part in their processes. In other words, "how one presents oneself is intimately linked with what is expected in a given situated context" (Hall et al., 1999, p. 294). The ideology of being a 'good client' can also be related to what Solberg (Solberg, 2014) has portrayed as being an 'active client' (p. 27) in relation the work line

discussed in the previous section. As pointed out, being active in one's own process is, for most aspects of social work, a goal in its own. Reaching a state where the service users are implementing an active identity to fulfill institutional obligations makes them "responsibilized" (Clarke, 2005) instead of such influence being imposed from the outside (Solberg, 2014).

Goffman pointed to a necessity and prerequisite for social life, that all its actors have a mutual set of normative expectations, where the norms are maintained partly because of their institutionalized character (Goffman, 2009, p. 168). In that sense, a discourse about being a good client can be withheld through stigmatizations, stereotypes and taboo subjects in ordinary conversations, such as receiving benefits from NAV (also known as 'Naving'), receiving psychiatric help or simply having a period in life where things are tough. Using these entry points, the use of institutional ethnography has the ambition of making power and ruling visible through the roles people partake (Widerberg, 2015). Understanding how people can play different roles in different scenarios helps understanding the intricacy of social life.

Chapter Four – Methodology

The pre-project

In this chapter I will address how I have approached the research methodologically including: my pre-project ideas, recruiting informants, data analysis, thoughts on ethical considerations, project limitations, questions of validity, and lastly, a critical view on the use of institutional ethnography.

In the early stages of planning this project I wanted to know if the topic of preparations before a meeting was at all a concern for young welfare clients. I wanted to know if the project was feasible. I decided to do a small pre-project and share my ideas with youth from The Chance Factory.

The Change Factory is an organization that helps youth who have experience with the public welfare system and help them share these experiences to social workers, politicians, schools, administrators etc. The youth call themselves 'pros', in the meaning of being professional of their own lives and owning their experiences. To provide insights to create better services for others who are or have been in their situation, the youth travel the country to talk to all the people who can have an influence in other youths' lives. After a presentation at the University of Stavanger, I reached out to The Change Factory and asked if it would be possible to talk to some youth to get their inputs. Within a short time, I scheduled a meeting with two youth who wanted to talk to me.

I met both of them for a conversation and talked about my idea and their experiences with meetings in the welfare apparatus. The first element I noticed was how my idea of investigating preparations was not a subject that the youth was used to talk about. They both took some time to find out what exactly I wanted an answer to. When they present their stories to politicians or social work professionals, they often talk about how they have been met by the system and how those encounters have affected them afterwards. Even though they did not quite grasp what my idea was, the way they responded to my questions made me reassured that this topic had the potential to be further investigated. The absence of clear answers I received could support a knowledge gap and discover new knowledge with implications for social work practice.

The recruitment process

Qualitative interviews have been used to gather data. According to Kvale (1996), qualitative interviewing is suitable when "studying people's understanding of the meaning in their lived world" (p. 105). DeVault and McCoy (2002) draws a more common relation when they say that interviewing resembles 'talking to people' because of its broad nature when investigating peoples' everyday lives. The purpose is to "investigate widespread and discursive processes" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 757). Because the goal is to understand coordinated activities between multiple sites, interviewing and other forms of data collective methods in IE (for instance observation or field notes), need not to be standardized (Campbell & Gregor, 2004).

For recruiting informants, I have used the snowball method (Andrews & Vassenden, 2007) which belongs to the category of non-probability sampling techniques, sample members are selected based on their network (Blaikie, 2009). The sample members can also be based on their knowledge, relationships, and expertise regarding a research subject as a commonality in non-probability sampling (Rees et al., 1993).

When I started recruiting informants, I used my experience of doing outreach work to create a network of both practitioners and young welfare clients. I ended up recruiting six young welfare clients from various social welfare institutions in Stavanger, Norway. First, I reached out to the field mainly through email and phone calls. Gaining access proved difficult, therefore I went out and visited my previous workplace, health stations for youth, youth clubs and a variety of organizations that work with young welfare clients with work inclusion and profiling youths' voices in social work legislation. To be 'in the field', talking to people led me to keep the snowball rolling as I got to extend my network and tell youth about my plan for this project. I believe going out where the youth were and describing the project to them first-hand was productive in getting their trust. Trust is vital when establishing a working relationship with people (Ryen, 2008). Only sending out emails with information about the project was not enough to make welfare workers or youth committed to participate in my study.

When I presented my project, I brought a poster with a short description of the project including a picture of myself. I believe having a face to relate to will help build the trust and commitment. Applying an outreach method of recruiting, talking openly and directly to the youth brought me closer to the ethnographic approach in institutional ethnography which was important for me to add to the recruitment process.

The interviews

I have interviewed six young welfare clients about their preparations. Three of the youth were interviewed individually and then one mini group interview with three youth. I did a follow-up interview with two of the three youths that were conducted individually. Two interviews were conducted in the University of Stavanger's facilities and the rest were conducted at the facility where the youth were recruitment. The interviews lasted between 15 minutes and approximately one hour each. The interviews were conducted in February and March 2020. All the interviews were tape recorded by consent and transcribed afterwards by me using the software program NVivo, version 12.

Planning the interviews, I intended to do one-on-one interviews with approximately six youth who had been in contact with various institutions in the welfare apparatus. While I was recruiting informants, I met three girls who would like to be interviewed together. I reflected on the pros and cons of doing a mini group interview in addition to single interviews. The interviews need not be standardized when collecting data, rather it is a process that is guided by my inquiry and exploration of the field. I decided that I could get a different perspective on the youths' everyday experiences by having them interviewed together and to see how their relation to each other could form their everyday lives in terms of preparation and dealing with meeting the welfare apparatus. It is difficult to know whether or not the data would have been better or just different if the three youths had been interviewed separately but exploring different ways of interviewing created an interesting learning outcome. I also believe that being all three in the interview simultaneously created a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for the youth.

Having two forms of interviews could enhance the validity of my data as I would have variety and another angle on my problematic but keeping in mind differences maintained important. Doing a mini group interview must not be confused with doing a focus group interview. When recruiting three youth to do this type of interview I knew there would be benefits, but also that I had to look at both pros and cons by complementing my data collection with this type of method. According to Hennink (2014), a focus group is an interactive discussion with between six to eight pre-selected participants, thus my mini group would not fall into this category of qualitative research tradition. My mini group interview has similarities to focus group interviews, in the sense that they may be used to "generate conversation about shared

experiences" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 757). Describing shared experiences will illuminate the youths' doings and how they are connected to institutional practices.

The situation of a mini group can redistribute power among the participants and the researcher and there can be calmness and strength in the informants meeting with the researcher (Madriz, 2003). I experienced moments where the informants could relate to each other and confirm each other's experiences and feelings they expressed. The notion that the three youth are close friends outside the interview only enhances their ability to play of each other's information and can apply contributions that might not have taken place in a single one-on-one interview with each of them individually.

I managed to contact two of the informants that had been interviewed individually to do a follow-up interview. The reason for doing follow-up interviews came from the inspiration of doing an institutional ethnography, having the opportunity to explore the field in-depth. By getting the chance to dig into the concrete linkage (Smith, 1999) between local settings of everyday life, organizations and translocal processes of administration and governance. During the first round of interviews I had the feeling that I did not get an exact grasp of the details of how their work could be linked to the parts of the welfare apparatus that they are in contact with. Therefor I decided to make an updated interview-guide where the concept of preparations was made more concrete. Beforehand, I made a list, containing all the different types of preparations they had mentioned they had done (Appendix three). I asked them to go through them and tell me if they recognized other types of preparations that they had not told me yet. By using the list as a conversation starter and making 'preparations' explicit, they had a clearer idea of what was in focus and could relate to the topic more easily. The concrete image of preparations set the premise for the analysis, where the linkage of local and translocal practices could be highlighted.

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed using the software NVivo. By transcribing my own interviews, I learned about my interview style and how I acted to follow up statements that stood out. I kept in mind the flow of the interview, if I interrupted the informants or if I could dig deeper into what they were saying. Most of all, through transcribing the interviews I got to start the analysis of the data by getting familiar with their accounts that was being written down. In the moments following each transcription I noted down improvements that could be made to the interview guide and what I felt I had not gotten answered in the interview and remarks the informants made that I did not follow up on. This gave the initial spark for doing a follow-up interview.

Data collection & data production

This study is inductive, meaning I start with my informants' experience and exploring different arguments and possibilities before tying it to theoretical concepts and broadening my perspective to institutions on a trans local level (Smith, 2005). What this means is to connect to the practices to larger structures and discourses in society. At the heart of this approach is getting to know how the institutional can help to explain how lives of the ones we research for are affected and their relations to society (Widerberg, 2015). Because most people are not aware of how their everyday activities might be connected to the larger institutional structures and impact, according to Smith, it is the task of the researcher to highlight this. As she writes:

> *The project is to extend people's ordinary good knowledge of how things are put together in our everyday lives to dimensions of the social that transcend the local and are all the more powerful and significant in it for that reason. We participate in them without knowing what we are doing* (Smith, 2006, p. 3).

IE advocates that social relations must be made explicit to raise awareness to "the ideological and social processes that produce experiences of subordination" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 754) for individuals. An IE research *must* include the people being studied and their knowledge about their own work, their *work knowledge* (Widerberg, 2015).

Wright and Rocco (2007) summarizes how we can use these produced accounts of peoples work. Meaning how data is treated in IE. Opposite to other ethnographic approaches, IE treats data not as the topic or object of interest but as an entry-point into the social relations of the setting that is being examined. There are two levels of data: level one (entry level data) and level two (translocal data). Level one is about the local setting and the interactions between individuals. Level two is data that extends beyond people's description of their experience to include extended social relations (Wright & Rocco, 2007).

To obtain data for the research project, institutional ethnographers go through three main phases of data collection: (a) investigation of local experience through the person's standpoint, (b) analysis of processes and larger social organization through the person's account of the experience, and (c) establishing the interconnection between macro and micro relations (Griffith & Smith, 1990; in Smith, 1987). In order to better understand the levels, one must understand how data collection can be linked to data production, as will be touched upon next.

The distinction between data production and data collection has its natural relevance when doing a qualitative research project with interviews as the primary source for data. Holstein and Gubrium (2016) argue that there is a clear distinction to be made that is important to reflect on before conducting a project. As for my project when taking inspiration from institutional ethnography I can take the ball of string and unravel as I go along (Smith, 2005). This means also taking one interview, analyze it and doing a second one to dig deeper into what my informants tell me. As Aase and Fossåskaret (2014) describes it, "the interview material cannot be lifted out of the social situation that has created it and then be treated as context free objective data" (p. 114). Data collection can metaphorically be like going to the woods and picking berries. They are just there for someone to collect them. Or as Holstein and Gubrium (2016) say, "because the interviewer aims to extract information, he or she stands apart from the actual data; the interviewer merely unearths and collects what is already there" (p. 71). The distinction lies in the mindset of the researcher and the product of an interview is a result of the social activity where the researcher and the informant form their response through roleplay and controlling of the impressions (Goffman, 1959).

After I did the first round of interviews, I went back to work on my interview guide and my research question. What did I want to know exactly and how does IE guide me to do this? I then rearranged my guide, changing slightly how I ask my questions and asked to see them again. In this way we can say that the data in general will, in all cases, be polluted by the researcher. Also, doing the second interview, I got to ask if the informants had thought about anything related to the topic or any reflections they had made since the last time we spoke. Doing this gives them an opportunity to process what we have already talked about and make them a part of producing new knowledge about this topic. Just by introducing them to ideas about their actions and the way they relate to the welfare services would be, in the frame of what Aase and Fossåskaret (2014) writes, differentiate picking their experience like berries from producing knowledge with them. By asking to do another interview I must also take into consideration the fact that the informants now have a clearer idea of what I ask about and has been given time to think and reflect upon their own answers, not creating answers on the spot, but having the potential of rehearsing or preparing answers in advance.

Knowledge requirements in social research

Validity and generality points to knowledge requirements in social research. As researchers we must always be able to answer to our research from the results that our methods have

given grounds to (Widerberg, 2015, p. 22). In other words, validity is about whether a method is fit to investigate what it is meant to investigate and whether or not our observations actually reflects the phenomenon we wish to explore (Kvale et al., 2009). Validity is not just related to confirmation, it is a process to develop more sustainable interpretations of observations (Cronbach, 1971, p. 443). The scientific knowledge that is being produced must be credible and known as valid for others to use.

Using IE as a method can solve the issue of validity in social research. By gaining a scope from above, a scope and perspective to study others, they become studied to produce knowledge about them, and not for them (Widerberg, 2015, p. 23). In this project, I do not produce a truth about how young welfare clients experience being in contact with the welfare apparatus and the preparations they do. Rather, a picture of how they can perceive their experiences with it can be presented. The focus is not on the subjects as people, but what they know about their own experiences and the relations they practice their doings within, in their social life. Therefore, according to Widerberg, IEs approach to this can be used as a tool to enhance the research's validity and legitimacy (Widerberg 2015, p. 23 – 25).

Generality is about whether we as researchers manage to establish descriptions, interpretations, and explanations that we can apply in similar areas than the one we are currently examining (Johannessen et al., 2010). The question if something can be generalized cannot be avoided in doing social research. Therefore, this project cannot not conclude with arguments that are general for the whole population or social work as a field, but welfare workers around the country can use the findings and analysis from this thesis. Thus, my findings may have a generalizable effect (DeVault & McCoy, 2002).

The battle of methods – A critical view on institutional ethnography

In this segment I would like to take the opportunity to take a critical stance to doing a study using tools and perspectives from institutional ethnography. The critical view of this method is important to include to keep in mind possible pitfalls of the research method being used. The constant battle in social research is finding the best method to produce the best knowledge in order to answer questions that will make the population more knowledgeable.

Institutional ethnography is conceptualized as an ongoing process of discovery and explication, which might beg the question whether or not the ongoing discovery will ever end. The field is always opening itself up as the researcher discovers more about the 'institutional

nexuses' that shape the local (Grahame, 1999). Institutional ethnographies allow a shift in focus as discovery occurs, tracing the texts as they travel and coordinate the sites through which they pass. The analysis is always leading to new questions and projects and so can never be finished (DeVault, 1999, p. 50). It is important to note this notion, that once unraveling the ball of string, one can truly pull and pull until there is nothing left. Only, there is always more to find and study. There can always be more people that do different types of work and with different *knowledge* about their work. These may all be interviewed with different questions to ask and different ways to ask them. In this sense, the feeling of concluding result could be easier using other methodologies that have a clearer "ending" to them. Keeping the analytical focus and managing to 'stay on track' in terms of a narrow project with a clear thread was, similar to learning a new form of research, a challenge that demanded much time and effort. Contrary, engaging in a new (institutional) focus created thus a larger learning outcome for me as a novice researcher.

Another critique to doing an institutional ethnography as a novice researcher is the constant thinking about whether or not your 'doing it right', as far as doing social research is a matter of technique and learning a trade or skill. As Walby (2007) writes:

> *The point of interviewing in institutional ethnography is not to learn about the individual per se but to learn about the individual's location in the relations of ruling or to learn what the individual does with texts*
> (Walby, 2007, p. 1012 – 1013).

In addition to the fact that "rigor in IE comes not from ascertaining a representative sample but from employing the techniques in ways that explicate ruling relations" (DeVault & McCoy, 2002, p. 764). If the researcher is unclear or lacking experience or knowledge about doing an IE study, risks focusing too much on applying the right techniques and 'doing it right'. Instead of simply trying and figure out the method along the way as is the way of an explorative method. The reference to knowing how to apply the ideas and tools to 'do it right' and thinking institutionally was a challenge in doing this project. I experienced having to learn to think in a new way, methodologically, to be able to grasp what the youth are *actually* doing and keep that in focus through the whole research process. What often came to mind during this process was thinking back to the interviews, knowing that I could have taken the opportunity to investigate more thoughorly certain 'paths' or statements that became visible during the interviews. Reflecting on it afterwards is easy. It is more challenging to know how to grasp those opportunity as the interview goes on consecutively.

Relating to doing the method right, is the same argument for conducting the analysis. I read many articles to get a clear picture and comprehension of IE and its complexities, but in the end having to simply try and puzzle the pieces together myself made me gain much more experience and seeing the whole picture for the way I wanted to use IE. Thus, the importance of applying principles in addition to not be afraid to try, fail and try again is important to remember for other novice researcher wanting to do a project inspired by institutional ethnography.

Moving towards an analysis

I started my analysis from a bottom-up perspective. By taking the point of departure in the informants' everyday experience I get to see their work, how their actions create their lives and then looking up to take a broader perspective of the institutional and the ruling relations. In this section I will describe how I did my analysis, from doing the interviews to writing them out.

I began my analysis process after each interview by noting down thoughts and reflections about what the informants had said during the interview. My analysis is iterative, meaning that I return to the data often throughout the process. Each time I do I become more familiar or "into" the data (Harreveld et al., 2016, p. 41). Much of what the informants' said had resonated with my personal experience working in the social work field, but at times I found myself having to analyze and reflect where unfamiliar topics or strategies they talked about came up. The informants told me things that I had never thought of in the sense of preparation and how the institutions they are in contact with could have an influence on their behavior.

Exploring the data

Starting the process of analyzing, I familiarized myself with the data. I printed out the transcriptions in order to work with them 'hands on'. I prepared a plan for how I would work with the data to get a close look at what was being said and a simple, yet effective way to organize them. I became aware of how intricate IE as a method of inquiry could be and the amount of data I had to examine. Therefore, I divided my analysis into six parts:

1. I read the transcripts and wrote down memos, my immediate thoughts and follow-up questions.
2. I read the transcriptions and color coded "traces of ruling" and "doings" separately.
3. I read the color codes and wrote down each quotation on a post-it. I laid out the post-its on a table and organized them into categories which was close to the empirical data.
4. I looked over the post-its and merged the categories that could be related to one another.
5. I made four large pieces of paper where I structured my findings into four levels. The levels made up a map that showed
   a. Who the youth are in contact with (the welfare apparatus)
   b. Why they are in contact with the welfare apparatus
   c. How they are in contact with them (ruling relations)
   d. How the youth relate to this contact with the welfare apparatus (their work)

By following this plan of analysis, I familiarized myself with the youths' description of their experiences and how things are connected, forming a map. The map is a tool in IE used to explicate how informant's work and relations of ruling are connected (Smith, 2005). The map functions as a «map of society» that the involved parties can navigate after (Smith, 2005, p. 51, 206). The map created for this project will only serve one standpoint to navigate after. A map can always be expanded and complemented with new knowledge. Thus, being a map of relations in motion (Smith, 1999, p. 129).

Ethical considerations

In all qualitative research, the researcher must be aware of possible ethical challenges and considerations to "do no harm" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 56). Throughout the project I have kept ethical conduct of research in the forefront and taken precautions for this to make sure that ethical procedures were followed. As early as permitted I applied approval to the Data Protection Official for research (NSD). In addition, I have tried to uphold my informants' anonymity to the largest degree. This means I have given all my informants pseudonyms, I have not requested any personal information other than names and telephone numbers and I have made sure to keep transcripts and records out of reach of anyone who do not need access to them. This means that I alone have had access to them and no one else. The transcripts and audio recordings will be erased after the submission of the thesis.

I have also used guidance from the National Research ethical Committee for Social science and Humaniores (NESH) when dealing with questions of ethical considerations.

When recruiting informants, I made sure to mention anonymity of their participation and did not ask for any additional information that was not needed. All participants signed the consent

form before the interviews were conducted. I added to all my information letters to the informants what it meant for them to participate and that it was voluntarily and that they could withdraw their consent at any time. In the beginning I received feedback from one of my gateway persons in an organization that the youth might have a hard time reading so much information which was in the initial information letter. Taken this advice into consideration I made a shorter (maximum one page) information letter, containing only the most important information about the project. I included a sentence supporting the informants experiences as highly valuable because they are the experts of their lives and experiences Information about their anonymity, my contact information, and a picture of myself was included. I found that it is an important aspect of ethical consideration to evaluate how to address the group I wanted to get in touch with. Youth might not want to read too much information at once and might find comfort and trust in having a picture of the researcher to see who it is. This is also reason for why I chose to go out in the field to recruit informants. As I came to realize, going out, showing up in person and being able to explain in ordinary terms the purpose of the project made it easier for the youth to catch interest.

Not to forget, the interview situation in itself produces ethical considerations. Having their challenges and experiences in focus, the young welfare clients would be in the position to share experiences that were troublesome. Following Miles' "do no harm" (2014) is to create a balance where their stories are in forefront, but not to push them to say more than they are comfortable with. As a researcher I must be aware about how talking about past events might produce possible reappearance of past traumas. Using an explorative method, it was easy to want to dig deeper and deeper to understand in-depth what they were telling. In order to prevent them from revealing something they did not wish themselves, I made it clear to every informant that they could tell me as much as they wanted and if there were questions they did not want to answer that was fine. This point is connected to validity and reliability in the sense that the informants must tell me what they *think* I want to hear, but also not say something that is not true, giving sincere descriptions.

Scope and limitations of the study

As this project was guided by ideas from institutional ethnography, it only centered around a few concepts and tools. This effort made a project of this size more comprehensible than doing a full scale IE project. I chose to only do interviews instead of pursuing an in-field ethnography. My initial plan for data collection was to go out with welfare workers whose

method is outreach work but evaluating my process of recruiting informants and the contact with the field made this plan too ambitious. In an alternative process I would have been able to center my data collection through an in-field placement and see what the youth do in their everyday lives instead of only hearing them describe it through interviews.

My effort in learning and employing this new way of thinking research were limited by a short timeframe of one semester. In that time, I needed to complete recruitment processes, transcription of the interviews, analysis and writing the thesis. This instance led to the decision to only recruit six young welfare clients and only focus on *their* experiences instead of the possibility of combining their experiences with the experiences of welfare workers as well. This limited my accounts to only include one perspective of social interactions with the welfare apparatus.

Chapter Five – Findings

When the youth tell about their experiences meeting with various welfare institutions, they describe doing thought out and comprehensive preparational work. These preparations, to a large extent, evolve around the youth preparing to show up for meetings and making a good impression on the welfare workers. To a lesser degree do they prepare on the actual content of the meeting and what they want out of it for *their* goal oriented process.

The youth describe three main approaches to these preparations which is exemplified in this chapter. The first, consist of practical preparations to get to the meeting location and to get through the meeting, such as preparing what clothes to wear, or finding parking space. The second approach is to prepare mentally for the meeting, such as blocking out any thoughts of having a meeting at all because it triggers negative emotions. The last piece of preparational work is emotional preparations where create a feeling of reassurance is at the essence.

Another finding is concerning how the youths' preparations differ depending on which institution they are meeting and how the institutions work with the young welfare clients. The main difference is between the bureaucratic practices of NAV on one hand, and the more flexible, accommodating methods of institutions doing outreach work, such as Uteseksjonen. The youth describe how their preparations differ depending on which of the institutions they are going to meet with.

In the following I will describe each finding and give examples from the interviews how this applies to the youths' work. Then I will move on to discuss the implications and how the relations of ruling can be made visible.

The youth prepare extensively for meetings

The first segment of findings includes the youths' extensive work that goes into preparing for meetings. Two examples come from Alice and Eric who describes how they use their time before a meeting.

Alice

Alice tells me she usually starts thinking about the meeting a day or two in advance. She needs having practical matters planned to feel ready for the meeting. It is her way of taking

control and according to her statements, her work is a way to control that processes in the system are not lost.

Alice tells me she usually starts thinking about the meeting one or some days in advance and prepare for the meeting the night before. Selecting clothes to wear in the meeting is for her an important part of the preparations. She says that

> (…) rather a day or two I will start thinking about what to wear and, I'm a bit queasy so I have to lay out what I need to bring, papers or my appointment book.

She also says that she needs to plan to get enough sleep as an important contributor in being ready. She says that:

> Sleeping enough is like, that it's a part of my natural behavior and my routine in general, but yes, almost planning when I'm going to bed to be able to get up the next day according to how much sleep I need.

She specifically mentions days when she has meetings where it is important to plan bringing meals for the day, sleep, outfits and figure out which bus routes to take. She emphasizes that eating a good breakfast and getting enough energy before a meeting is especially important. Meetings can be perceived as heavy and burdensome and she tells me she needs the energy to stay focused and stay on top of things. Often, she does not have enough time, which can cause stress in the morning before going to the meeting. Time is thus as a practicality that demands focus and attention for Alice in her day-to-day life.

Being prepared with the practical matters reduces her stress and shows that she is in control of her process. As mentioned above, Alice does not want the papers to go missing in the system. Alice mentions this with ambivalence. She says she often brings papers, documents etc. for the purpose of speeding up the bureaucratic process, leaving her with a feeling of acting as a coordinator between institutions. She mentions that case processing in NAV takes time and she tries to make sure that NAV receives correct documents faster, rather than depending on the caseworker and that they are less likely to forget or misplace them. She says, "it only gets consequences for me if I don't do it", and she worries that something might go missing in the system. She says that it is like she needs to do the job for them, handing in documents and making sure it gets done. She says, "I don't even know where it all ends up". It is a practical matter that she wishes a coordinator of some sort could do so that the responsibility does not lay on her.

A concrete example she gives from a follow-up meeting is when she was summoned to a meeting and had only gotten an online message beforehand giving the time and date of the meeting. The message said nothing about what the meeting was about and discussing with her mother they agreed that it was probably just a follow-up meeting. The physical letter with details of the meeting came in her mailbox after the meeting had taken place. She says that not having more information to go on leaves her confused as to how to prepare for a meeting like that.

Eric

Eric needs to be in control and a key part of the preparation is about how to get to the location for the meeting. He knows the city well, but if the meeting is in a place he has not been before, he will drive out to the location of the meeting a day or two before. He wants to see if there are parking opportunities and whether or not it is a free parking or pay-to-park. Following is his description of this work:

> *E: If I don't know where it is, the first thing I do is maybe the day before or a few days before, then I just drive over and see "ok, this is where I'm going, that's good". Then I drive home and on the day of the meeting I take a random route there.*
> *M: Yes. Because last time you mentioned that you plan if there is parking there.*
> *E: Yes. It's one thing I always look for when I'm going someplace or if I know the place then I know if there is parking or not. And if the parking lot is small then I need to think about if there aren't any available spots, I need to find somewhere else to park. When I drive my motorcycle then it's no problem because it's usually parking in the bike parking or something like that.*
> *…*
> *M: And you do this the same day or before?*
> *E: It depends. If I have a meeting at 4 o'clock, then I might take a trip around 12 just to check it out. And then I go do whatever I need to do after I have figured out "ok, I can just park there or there or there", just to have an emergency parking opportunity if it's not available there or there.*
> *M: Ok*
> *E: Yeah, so it's just planning a bit parking because it's ok just to not be late for the meeting.*

Eric says here that he needs to figure out where he can park and have a backup plan for parking. He does not want to be late for his meeting, so he will double check in advance just to be sure. He tells me that he has experienced before going to a meeting and the parking lot being full. Not having a backup plan made him go looking for a place to park. He ended up

being so late for his appointment that the session was almost finished when he got to the meeting. He knows that if he is going to a meeting with his therapist there is usually limited parking, and the parking is mostly reserved for staff, leaving him and other service users to have to find parking other places.

Three ways of preparing

Preparing practicalities

One way the youth prepare for meetings is having practicalities done to feel ready to meet the welfare workers. These preparations are done to meet criteria within the welfare institutions' obligatory meetings.

Going back to Alice, clothes are important to her as it acts as a clear statement to how involved she is to her own processes. She tells me she does not want to fit into stereotypes of people who receive social benefits and needs help from others in living a good life. Alice turns to her closet to find out what she needs to wear for different types of meetings. For her, going to a meeting at NAV or going to the doctor has two different aspects in terms of what to wear. She does not want to be recognized as someone else, but nevertheless she feels the need to present herself as serious for the institutions she meets.

She has gotten to the point where she is no longer too concerned with having a good relationship with her welfare workers because she no longer experiences the professionals to be that interested in *her*. She says that they were interested in knowing her truth when she was younger, but now most of them are more concerned with documentations, papers, and processes.

Alice has recently needed to drop out of an educational program due to her health condition and she tells me about her meeting at NAV to discuss financial support from now and forward. She picks out a nicer top, clothes without much wear and tear to show that "I'm not a slacker, even though I dropped out". She wants to give the impression that she is a functioning, competent and reasonable, well versed person and tries to handle her life even though her health does not always allow her to. If she is going to see her doctor however, for example about a lump on her foot, she does not pick out the tightest socks or the nicest top. In this way, she plans her outfits in advance to fit the type of meeting she is going to.

Preparations to deal with inner resistance

This finding reflects how the youth find it difficult to attend meetings and often have a hard time motivating themselves and pushing themselves to get to the meeting and seeing it through. The following is an example of Eric having a strategy that makes it easier for him to be able to attend meetings without having to spend time and energy on preparations.

I ask Eric about how he prepares for meetings with the welfare apparatus. He has been in contact with various institutions that helps him with financial support, work inclusion and psychiatric help for depression and anxiety. Eric tells me that he generally does not prepare for meetings. He has suffered from depression and negative thinking and whenever he thinks about going to meetings, he notices stress and anxiety building up. He says that if he tries to think about it, it only gets worse, and his only way of being able to go to the meetings and doing what he needs to do to achieve his goals is to block everything out. If he thinks about the meetings and how they might turn out makes him spiral down into a 'black hole'. That is why he has found out that not thinking about the meeting until he is actually there is the best way to deal with having to do something that creates these consuming feelings. Being in the black hole makes him loose focus of the aim of the meeting and he is not able to see positive solutions. He says, «…if I haven't been there before it gets a bit more, it gets to the scary side, that I try to block it out and not think about it before I'm there". He tells me that after a few meetings he is able to be comfortable being in the meetings and at that point it is just like going to a friend's house or to the grocery store, like any everyday activity. A part of our conversation describes it like this:

> *M: Have you had or got any habits, routines, or preparations you do before you*
> *are going to these meetings?*
> *E: I have a bit of social anxiety and stuff. So, it's a bit hard for me to go out for*
> *such things in general. But then I generally just try to just, not think about it at*
> *all before I go. I don't think about any of it. And I don't think about it on the way*
> *over or anything. I just think, just like I'm going to the store or something.*
> *M: Interesting.*
> *E: I just blank it all out until I'm there and then it's just, "yeah, ok now I'm here*
> *in a meeting". Then I kinda have to take it on the whim (snaps his fingers).*
> *M: Yeah*
> *E: So I take it so that I can't think about it, because if I think about it then I'm*
> *going to think about everything that, everything that can go wrong, that I can,*
> *that they can say something that I don't want to happen or..*
> *M: Ok. So, your preparations are to...*
> *E: Really not…*

M: Just block it out
E: Yeah almost just block it out.
M: Until you are..
E: All the way there, until I sit in the office.
M Ok.
E: Unless I have been there a couple of times. If I have been there a few times then I think, then I have someone to talk to someone about stuff, something I want to address or something they have said they want to talk to me about. Then it's just, "there's some stuff, then I just drive over, no problem". Just like I'm going to a friend. For me it's the same feeling. I'm going to a friend and no problem.
M: Is it like that every time?
E: Yes, or, if I have been there a few times it's like going to a friend's place. Because then I know that I'll come to a friendly face, know that I will come to a nice place.
M: So then you have that knowledge from before.
E: Then I have the sense of safety I shall have with me from having been there before.

Blocking it out is a way for him to control his emotions and keep site of the positive aspects of receiving help from the welfare apparatus. Then he does not need to engage in the feelings or deal with what is the aim of the meeting. And afterwards he totally forgets about having been to the meeting at all. That is his way of managing his time and energy related to the contact with the welfare institutions. He says he would rather use his time and energy going to his vocational training and work to get a job.

Revisiting Eric's preparation of parking space, he also says that planning where to park is a way to minimize meeting people he might know and being able to go to meetings by himself. He says:

I didn't want people in on it, didn't want people to know about it, the least amount of people knowing that I went to see a psychiatrist at all. I got the scary feeling that people would look at me like this freak you can say. For needing psychiatric help.

Eric wants to be able to do everything himself, tries to avoid talking to people so much and not wanting people to know that he receives help, especially from psychiatric facilities because he might be labeled a 'freak' for receiving psychiatric help. Related to the feeling of reassurance, he tells me that before going to a meeting with NAV he thought about NAV with connotations to people who 'only receives social benefits' and claim to have back pains, but

in reality does not want to do anything. For him, knowing more about NAV and what they do helped him put aside the taboo of receiving social benefits because it might be better for him than not accepting the help.

Emotional preparations

During the minigroup interview, the youth told me how they tend to check out welfare workers on social media. They meet many different welfare workers and during changes of NAV offices or workers going on leaves, they have to relate to and get to know many different people. They say that they check out welfare workers on social media to create a feeling of reassurance and like they have met before. The conversation about this topic unfolded like this:

> *M: Have you, because you talked about getting their private numbers, availability, easy to text and call. Have you checked out any welfare workers on social media? Is that something you do?*
> *C: Unfortunately, yes.*
> *K: Like I said, if I'm meeting someone new and I get their names then I look them up to see and read a bit about that person, so yes.*
> *M: Yes.*
> *C: I do that too. Also, because then I know approximately how they look when I'm going to the meeting.*
> *M: Ok.*
> *C: And not being totally lost.*
> *M: Is it to see who they are or to have a face?*
> *K: For me it is to feel safer. To know who, like the psychologist, I looked him up so when he came out to get me, then I saw that it was him I was meeting so I got up before he came. So, then I felt that, I felt that me and him had known each other a long time.*

Knowing what the people they meet looks like and being able to be upfront with meeting them in the waiting room can create a feeling of emotional reassurance. They share that reassurance is needed because they often get assigned caseworkers without knowing that a switch has been made because of high turnover in NAV and psychiatric facilities. The minigroup interview reviled experiences of frequently new people to deal with and not receiving information about those new welfare workers or what the change might imply for their process. Reassurance is needed to balance their general skepticism to the welfare institutions because it seems to them that they are left out of the planning and not knowing

what comes next. As Valery points out, "there's always a reason for having the meeting", leaving them to often wonder what meetings are about and who they are going to meet.

Meetings with different welfare institutions

The youth perceive the institutions and welfare workers they are in contact with differently. During the analysis, a junction between two types of welfare institutions became eminent. On one side the youth described NAV as a bureaucratic, 'heavy' and skeptical service provider that has power over processes that are 'written in stone'. On the other hand, Uteseksjonen who mainly focus on doing outreach work is seen as being a "softer" type of welfare institution that leaves the process up to the youth and work on the youths' behalf. In this segment I will show how the youth prepare differently before a meeting in NAV and a meeting with Uteseksjonen.

Heavy meetings – planning something fun after

The youth have unanimous experiences of struggles with the welfare apparatus and preparing mentally to show up and how to meet requirements from the system. During our conversation of different ways of preparing, Alice tells me that she often things of and plans fun things to do after a meeting. She explains to me that she puts more emphasis on recovering after meetings than that of planning and preparing beforehand. Following is an exert of our conversation around this topic:

> *A: That I plan to have something when the meeting is finished, that I will meet someone, grab a cup of coffee or something. Like, to me it's important to, recover rather than to prepare myself.*
> *M: Ok!*
> *A: Eh..so that's one thing I might add. That it's more that I think.*
> *M: Ok. So meeting someone or grab a coffee is that what do you mean by recover?*
> *A: It's like, not that I always expect the meetings to go badly, but just, if it were a troublesome meeting or if I were to, if we have talked about something that is hard or yeah, in general I feel that these meetings are a bit heavy, that it's boring, tough, or like, all kinds of things.*
> *M: Right.*
> *A: So, it's just something to look forward to.*
> *M: Something to balance it up against.*
> *A: Yes. To have planned that I'm just going to get through this meeting.*
> *M: Yeah*

A: And then something fun happens, then I can kind of reward myself for finishing this meeting, that it went well, or maybe not so well, but now I'm doing something fun and it's important for me to have something that ways up for, if it were to go badly or just to have something to look forward to.

Alice says that in her mind she needs to get through the tough meetings. Having an activity that lifts her up afterwards acts as a reward for getting there and sitting through the meeting that she expresses as heavy and burdensome. She also points out that it is often like we (as service users) need to stay *in* the meeting "until something is figured out", forcing them (the caseworkers and the youth) to figure everything out *during* the meeting, not being able to leave before the process is moving forward. Thus, meetings often have a serious tone that needs to be leveled out by the youth.

Being met halfway and use of humor

Discussing with the three friends in the minigroup interview, they described institutions like Uteseksjonen and Miljøtjenesten as easier to deal with and meeting them where they are.

Investigating what makes the difference, Katie tells me that when she has meetings with the municipal welfare service "Miljøtjenesten", she does not need to plan so much for it. Miljøtjenesten is a part of the municipal social support which aims to give her practical help, but also conversational support to have someone to talk to. In many circumstances they act similarly to Uteseksjonen in mandate and function. Sometimes she wakes up from her phone ringing and that can be her contact person standing outside, waiting for her to come out. She tells me that by coming to her house and waking her up, 'forces' her to show up to the meeting and also makes it easier to meet because they have met her halfway. She does not need to go anywhere for the meeting, as described above can be problematic for her.

The three friends also discuss the difference in dealing with Uteseksjonen, who does outreach work with youth in the city centrum. The need to show up is less prevailing when dealing with the social workers patrolling the city because they meet them where they hang out. There was never any stress and they just came up to them to ask how things were going and if they could help them with something, anything at all. The youth got the social workers private work numbers and when they did have more formal meetings, these were always filled with laughter and an easy-going mood and tone.

M: Was it easy to open up to them?
K: In the beginning it was a bit difficult. But the one who works there, she was
so easy to talk to, so I opened up right away. To her.
C: It's really easy if it's Ester you mean.
K: Mm..
C: She is very…
K: It was her that I opened most up to and the two others she brought with her.
It was those three that I talked to the most. It was three people.
M: So, what was it about those, or she that was so easy?
K: She was so sparkly. She got humor out of it. She's…
C: So goofy kinda. She's not that serious. She jokes I say, and then I think it's
easier for us youth to talk to her.
K: Because she comes up like, she comes jumping in and dancing and, spreads
out joy, so it's just so easy to sit down and talk to her.

From this part of the interview, Camilla and Katie explains how humor and not being so serious can have positive effects on how they perceive the social worker they are in contact with. Contrast to these experiences is having to deal with a system that is rigid and bureaucratic with meetings that are described as heavy and burdensome. The youth describe the people working there as grumpy and Camilla remembered being bullied by her caseworker with her mom present.

Commonly is a wish that the welfare workers in general had a more direct link into the service provision. Having a phone number they could call, would make it easier for them. Alice says that she wished she would not have to go through "14 different switchboards, just to ask a simple question". And often in her cases, there are only one person who can answer a specific question regarding her follow-up and going through the systems switchboards takes a lot of time. In contrast, the youth who had contact with Uteseksjonen told that they always would get the workers phone number each time they met, just to make sure that they had her number in case they needed anything.

This last part shows the youths' experiences with two different types of institutions in the welfare apparatus, NAV as a bureaucratic and rigid system and Uteseksjonen as flexible and working more on behalf of the youth themselves.

Preparing to show up – Concluding remarks

Summing up the main findings from the analysis is preparational work that the youth do to sustain attending meetings or showing up. The work is extensive, but do not include what they want to achieve *in* the meeting as much as overcoming oneself and resisting going.

The three main ways that was discovered through the analysis is of practical matters, mental preparation and emotional preparations where create a feeling of reassurance is at the essence. Giving examples from Alice who wants to show that she is something else than 'a slacker' and Eric who is fighting his anxiety just to manage to get to the meetings. I have shown how they try to face the expectation from the welfare institutions of attending obligatory meetings and at the same time fighting their own resistance to getting to the meeting.

I have also described how two different institutions affect the youths' experiences. The youth experience stress and anxiety of meeting a system that is rigid and bureaucratic and needs to do more preparing before attending those meetings. Meeting a flexible institution where the welfare workers meet them outside of the office and giving them a direct link to their services helps lower the pressure for the youth. In addition to using humor and an easy-going tone creates more reassurance for the young welfare clients.

Chapter Six – Discussion

The findings presented in this thesis are giving a deeper insight into young welfare clients time before a meeting with the welfare apparatus. The data analysis intentionally applied a specific framework with tools from institutional ethnography to understand how their experiences might be institutionalized through the social relations they are a part of.

The misunderstood notion that young people who receive benefits are not involved in their own process and do not prepare for meetings are defied by the findings of this research. The findings suggest that the young welfare clients do a lot of work in their time before going to a meeting. They are highly aware of the social relation they are a part of and how aspects of the welfare apparatus affect their day-to-day life. As an integral part of the discussion, it is important to point out how many of their routines, unconscious behaviour and actions in their lives are controlled by aspects of the welfare apparatus in contradiction to the way that the welfare apparatus' services and interventions are designed to help them.

In this part I will elaborate on how the youths' preparations vary according to what type of institution they are meeting, how their preparations are a means to be able to show up to meetings and how their actions can or cannot have consequences for their everyday lives. In addition, an elaboration on how they frame themselves according to roles and self-empowerment will also be part of the discussion.

Preparing to show up

Looking at the findings, all the youths' preparations points to strategies they are using to be able to show up to meetings. Showing up, or simply attending meetings, is important to be recognized as someone who is willing to meet the requirements of the welfare apparatus. In order to be eligible for welfare goods such as financial benefits or someone to talk to about this life and difficulties. Looking at Eric's strategy for getting to a meeting, blocking out any thought of the meeting makes him able to get to the location of the meeting and finding a parking spot reduces the stress of getting late to the meeting. Both of the preparations help him show up. He has experienced before that not preparing where to park has made him spend much time looking for parking which in the end made him miss the whole meeting. The same thing happens if he tries to think about what to say or the content of the meeting. Then he goes into a negative mindset and experiences high levels of stress and anxiety. Thus, making up a strategy to be able to show up at all becomes important for him.

The strategies are tools that the youth use intentionally when facing difficulties with being in relations with the welfare apparatus. The young welfare clients are in no position of chancing the system, but find it challenging to live up to the expectations, leaving them to change the way they can relate to the institutions the workers they are in contact with. Next, these expectations will be addressed and how they can be understood.

Playing by the rules

Expectations are embedded in the ruling relations that youth have with welfare workers. Discussing the different ways the youth prepare links to the need to be a 'good client' in the welfare apparatus and the expectations that welfare workers often have on service users' behalf. As stated initially, being eligible for services comes with expectations of what to do in order to obtain rights. This means doing what welfare workers tell them to do, in the sense that they have power to control what they get or not.

This does not mean the young welfare clients are not sick or need help, but the states ambitions are higher than what might be necessary. Dahl Jacobsen points out, "there's no place for handing out clothes and shoes" (p. 176), suggesting welfare benefits are being *traded* for work (Kjørstad, 2005) rather than focus on what the service user's need.

Dahl Jacobsen (1973) pointed out that the weak people in the society has been betrayed and lack (among others) political power and influence. His explanation lies in that

> *the system presuppose that the clients make themselves known with the public measures that concerns themselves, that they take advantage of the public goods that is put to their disposition and can protect themselves from unfortunate necessities, to that degree that it is their right* (Jacobsen, 1973, p. 179).

The clients must take significant control, and with countless and complicated institutions and services, presupposes the clients have a high level of information and well developed ability to speak up. That is, if the apparatus is to function the way it is meant to (Jacobsen, 1973, p. 179). This means that it is the service users' responsibility to gather information according to the help they need and themselves act to make use of the public goods. Meaning that to "succeed" in the system you must be able to navigate the system, as Jacobsen is describing. Taking into the consideration the local differences in municipal outline of services, the youth must take significant responsibility of gaining information relevant to their welfare situation and changes in their life. Are the young welfare clients then preparing for meetings in the

'wrong' way according to what is expected? In the introduction, a link to service users' 'job' was provided and saying that the type of work they ought to do, have to be meaningful and productive. Neglecting to 'play by the rules', by preparing in the way *they* feel they have to and not by prescribed activities, can have consequences for the youth. They must then avoid these consequences of not obliging the institutional demands, by showing up to meetings as the minimum requirement. If not, in the long run they can face even bigger problems due to the restriction of public goods. This means that the young welfare clients have to make sure they do what they can to show up to these meetings regardless of what they might want or should do. These implications can continue to make service users nervous and anxious, because even showing up will leave service users powerless and resistant to any attempt of a collaborative relation with for example NAV. Thus, awareness about service user's reactions to institutional obligations must be raised in order to make collaborations better.

Different preparations for different meetings

Looking at the findings in-depth reveals a predominant difference to the way the youth prepare for meetings. The extremity lies between NAV as a bureaucratic and rigid institution at one end of the spectrum and flexible and accommodating institutions like Uteseksjonen at the other. Further, who's premises are taking into consideration are at the core of the discussion, but with knowledge about the institutions and how they function as an important factor.

The youth have positive and negative experiences attending meetings with the different institutions and they express gratitude for the help they receive. However, a deep dissatisfaction with meetings in NAV prevail the youths' description of the meetings they have been to and must prepare accordingly. Applying Goffman's (1959) perspective, the youth have to prepare a front-stage appearance to a higher degree based on the role they think they need to take and expectations to meet obligations, than to meetings with flexible and accommodating institutions. In a way, they have to 'put on a show' and altering their persona to not fit stereotypes of being a 'slacker' or a 'naver'. When Eric got information about how NAV works and what he could expect from the meetings, it was easier for him to put aside the stereotypes that says that only lazy people who fake being sick receives benefits. The use of discretionary power, for example by use of terms and sanctions are a part of NAVs toolbox. These are often seen as being too strict and used to refuse service users benefits. Caseworkers have influence on distribution and allocation of the welfare states services and benefits, but at

the same time those have an influence on the youths' everyday lives. The youth might do not understand the necessity for this type of interaction. The social workers do not always have the scope of action to make an appraisal based on their own judgement and experience (Malmberg-Heimonen et al., 2019), making them also having to relate to the rules of the welfare state that are developed for equal distribution of goods to those who are eligible.

Similar to Åsheim's (2018) research of youth that are in long work assessment processes in NAV are affected negatively, the heaviness and burdensome meetings as the youth describe them, might be perceived as it because of the necessity to talk about challenges and how NAV can help. Attending meetings is obligatory in order for NAV to do its work and meet the requirements as being a safety net, but still leaves youth needing to understand the institutional rules of the game in what Løchen (1973) referred to as the welfare jungle.

Opposite to these experiences are preparing for meetings with institutions like Uteseksjonen. Those services are in general formed with a mandate to seek out young people through outreach work, making them able to stay where the youth are and being flexible in their work. Their main mandate is to create a trustful relationship that can help youth get in touch with someone when they need help, but without being bound by strict process oriented reform. The youth they approach are often at risk of developing social challenges and exclusion from society and the workers might need other tools to get in touch with them. Having welfare workers who has humor and an easy going feel for getting in touch with youth might be a character trait that employers of these services are highlighting as important and fitting due to their work methods and mandate. What these institutions do not have in their mandate is to act as that safety net and providing services like financial benefits or work assessment programs. They simply act differently and on different premises, but still with the same aim to help people, as seen in Andersson's (2013) and Soggiu's (2020) research. According to the youths' expressions, the workers have more relational power so that the youth have someone they trust and feel close to, and that may be important as a comfort in dealing with other institutions. Contrary to the comfort lies a notion that the youth are 'in control' of the relation, leaving them to have the authority to say no to meetings and approach the workers when *they* want to. This can also lead to stagnation of any form of process that the youth are in. This analysis supports what Spencer and authors (2019) found in their study of youth-initiated mentoring where the youth had a stronger connection to their mentors when being able to choose their mentors themselves, leaving the collaboration more on *their* premises.

Gaining knowledge about the differences in function and mandate of the various institutions seem eminent for the youth to leave some stress and anxiety behind before attending meetings. For example, the youth talk about switching caseworkers often and not receiving information about it before they attend the meeting with the new caseworker. Welfare workers have power through information regarding processes and can engage the youth in getting to know the differences of the various institutions and communication around what roles each person plays in the social relation. Welfare workers can provide reassurance for the youth that the system is there to help by giving too much, rather than too little information. This process is twofold. In order to achieve processes towards a 'better life', there is a need for the youth to contribute into the collaboration. When Alice points out that, "I don't even know where everything goes", she is pointing to documents and applications being delivered to the system. If she would ask the caseworker herself, she would get to know what happens to those documents and applications. If this information would be given to her without her having to ask for it, would potentially ease some stress and make sure that both Alice and the welfare worker are on the same page. Communicating how information is given or asked for is important to address so that neither Alice or the welfare worker misunderstands each other.

Communication between the youth and institutions

An impact of how the institutions and youth communicate with each other has been found in the analysis. As described in the theoretical framework, texts work as an initiator for ruling relations. The youths' description of how they communicate with the institution and which medium is being used can point to who decide the terms for how to communicate and triggers a ruling relation.

For instance, Alice talked about receiving an online message from a welfare worker being summoned to a meeting. The message stated only time and date, but that the actual letter in which the purpose of the meeting was stated did not arrive until *after* the meeting had already taken place. Once Alice receives the message, she is entering a conversation with the institution, which prompts a ruling relation. When she reads the message, she is interacting with the worker for the institution, but not getting enough information, the relation creates implications for her everyday life, in this case how she can prepare for the upcoming meeting. Given the fact that the message only said something about time and place and nothing what the meeting was about, she is left to wonder what will happen, and would need to prepare for what she only can assume is the purpose of having a meeting. In addition, she said that she

finds it hard to get through to the institutions because she has to go through "14 different switchboards, just to ask a simple question". As Jacobsen (1973) would point out, she becomes responsible for obtaining the information needed and, in this case, cannot rely on the welfare worker to give her enough information. Taking into consideration, the social relation they are in might imply that a message with time a date is appropriate from the welfare worker's side, if they believe that the information given is enough if the meeting is *just* a follow-up meeting.

Reasons for NAV being perceived as rigid and 'static' as an organization might be a result of the demand to facilitate services for thousands of people that act as a safety net. This fosters a need for caseworkers to be efficient and structured in their work. This result in meetings to be shorter and communication going through *their* channels and not through handing out private phone numbers. The youth express dissatisfaction with the premises set for communicating with NAV, saying that it takes a lot of time to go through switchboards and never getting through to *their* caseworker. Having to spend much time and effort on communication creates feelings of stress and anxiety dealing with those institutions. One way to see it is that in order to be eligible for services and benefits, service users must attend meetings with their caseworker and go through the 'proper channels' to assess and validate their need for assistance and effort from NAV.

Linking text to contemporary aspects of social media and mobile phones, the institutional way of keeping in touch has been found to differ similarly to the youth's preparations. The youth highlight having a private number to call as important in the contact with Uteseksjonen. The fact that they are given the workers number each time they meet, just to make sure they have someone to call, initiates a ruling relation in which the youth and their needs are in focus. Opposed is the youths need to check out welfare workers on social media. That can act as a counter-power practice to gain reassurance before a meeting. The action is a text mediated ruling relation where the youth tries to balance the social work interference to their advantage. Linking this to Åsheim (2018), who found an implications for youth who had long assessment processes with NAV, communication can be linked as a factor in keeping institutional trust and withholding stamina in the social relation they are a part of. As shown in these findings, having an open line of communication helps build institutional trust, but might not work in a bureaucratic system where the demand from service users are higher.

Empowering practices

The empowerment tradition has resemblance to the notion of being a good and active client. Often defined as a way to giving power 'back' to the service users by the social workers to gain some sense of autonomy and use of their resources of their own lives (Thompson, 2012). Andersen (2018) shows how the term can be adapted to different ideologies and therefore must be read and used with caution. Hence, making use of the options and services available to them means they must fulfill the means of being good (active) vs not being good (inert) and live up to these ideals. To choose 'right' becomes a dilemma for some, because they must choose between an unrealistic ideal of someone who has a plan for them (the welfare workers) and their own hopes, visions, and needs. In addition, a reflection upon society's values of what constitutes as someone being in a position of power in their own lives is that of receiving social benefits. As Alice and Eric both points out, receiving benefits from NAV has connotations to stereotypies and has become a taboo in our society. As a young adult, you are supposed to take care of yourself and manage your own life. Seeing that in light of the youths' preparations before meeting the welfare apparatus does not align.

Looking at the youths' description of their preparations, a set of counter-power practices can be revealed. As Efskind (1984) points out, those practices can be a way to obtain power on one's own behalf. Alice's plans to do something fun after a meeting, checking social media to ensure reassurance or Eric planning where to park, are all subtle ways in their daily lives that the youth do to balance what they seem as troublesome social relations with an apparatus that causes stress and anxiety. Understanding their statements, they do not always feel met and safe that the system works on their premises. Applying their understanding of resistance, being to 'test' relationships, can be used to underly the findings in this thesis. In addition, looking at the findings through the research done by Munford and Sanders (2017), taking the time to build trust and strong connections in the collaboration between youth and service providers cannot be seen through the youths' statements. Hence, the empowering practices of the youth in this study creates a potential for development in the collaboration, especially between The Norwegian labor and welfare administration and these young welfare clients.

Several studies points to the importance of a good relation between welfare clients and welfare workers (Ask & Lilleng, 2018; Ekrem, 2019; Henningsen et al., 2008; Morvik, 2016, Braciszewski et al., 2018; Eide & Eide, 2004, Rød, 2019; Skoglund et al., 2018; Spencer et al., 2019). Linking the analysis to Fossestøl's (2012) research on practitioners in NAV, the

caseworkers described their roles, judgment, and engagement in the social services in relation to their mandate. What was found was that many of them did not dare to show too strong engagement in cases because of the objective and neutral role that is valued in the system. Their focus was that of being a manager of services and Fossestøl explains it like this,

> *throughout [their statements] is an ambivalence or insecurity in the social workers in regard to articulate the connection between their own (moral/professional) engagement and their own professionalism/competence* (Fossestøl, 2012, p. 256 – 273).

Linking the statement to the findings described here means that objective and neutrality might act as a barrier and diminishes the institutional trust which makes the youth stress and be anxious before meetings, instead of looking forward to it and want to contribute to the content of progress, as they do in meetings with Uteseksjonen. It appears though to be hard for the young welfare clients to meet a system that, in addition has strong expectations to them and are hard to get a hold of, makes it hard to obtain a relation that is more personal and more concerned with administering services.

Building a front-stage appearance

As pointed out during this discussion, institutional expectations and lack of institutional trust make the young welfare clients feel that they have to fit a certain role, when attending a meeting. An example is found in Alice's description of picking out outfits as a way to prepare. She says that she wants to be perceived not as a 'slacker' just because she has dropped out of her educational program. Showing outwardly that she can manage her own life is controlled by the expectations from the system that she needs to be active in her own process and are not "allowed" to fall ill or want to take a step back and assess next without having to also worry about her perceived appearances. She does not want to fit into the stereotype of people who 'just' receive social benefits and does nothing else with their lives, yet she feels limited in her capability to just be herself. Her outlook on who she needs to present herself as has resemblance of Goffman's (1959) analogy of the theatre play. Alice is trying to 'guide' or control the impression that the welfare workers have of her by choosing clothes that she *thinks* will benefit her in the meeting that is the premises of the social relations she engages in. The findings tell nothing about whether she picks the outfits for her own personal feeling of being empowered or to boost her own self-confidence. Understanding her selection of outfits in an institutional setting, she prepares being 'front-stage' *in* the

meeting at home (back-stage) in preparation for her role as a 'good client'. In this sense, preparing to show up can also have resemblance of Goffman's theatre analogy and 'putting on a show' as shown in the segment for different meetings. The youth take on a role of someone who are able to meet these requirements and expectations at the same time as keeping a role of who they are outside of the meetings.

At the same time as Alice is trying to guide welfare workers impression of her in one setting, she knows what is expected of her in other welfare settings and acts according to those known expectations. In the interview she tells that she does not put on tight socks for a doctor's appointment if he is to look at a lump on her foot. She knows that the doctor only has limited time to consult her and she does not want to waste the consultation on practicalities. Thus, making some parts of the institutional rules easier to understand for her than others. One can argue that the institutionalized 'instructions' can be hard to interpret.

Alice's assessment resembles Dorothy Smith's article about a mental health patient named 'K' (1978). Smith describes a girl whose friends and family are reacting to her unusual behaviour. She is confronted with the fact that she might be mentally ill because of the way she acts and what she does. The point being that to be perceived as 'well' your actions must align accordingly, be in a certain way, what Smith calls "instances of misusage" (Smith, 1978, p. 46). Smith refers to how "we" are expected to act to certain instructions, for example,

> (...) ketchup, etc., carries the "instructions", "eat in small quantities"; that a teapot in relation to its lid is constructed so that the sticky-out bit on the top fits into a notch in the rim of the pot and hence the 'instructions' – 'if the top doesn't fit the first time around then rotate it until the sticky-out bit fits into the notch' (Smith, 1978, p. 46).

Drawing similarities to expectations in the welfare apparatus as these 'instructions', one must 'fit the lid' in accordance with the expectations of being a good welfare client. Knowing to eat ketchup in small quantities, or fitting the lid of the tea pot is rather simple information about their usage, hence, should information as in expected behavior be 'simple' information for these young welfare clients to grasp without worrying about the consequences? Alice's preparations are good examples of how she tries to prepare in a broad spectrum, choosing clothes *and* coordinating between services, planning what to say. As Smith writes, "the process of showing that something an individual has done can be properly seen as an instance of breaking the rule is not by any means simple" (1978, p. 26). Meaning that stating whether

or not these young welfare clients prepare in a 'wrong' or 'right' way must undergo assessment of the worker – client collaboration.

Concluding remarks

I have discussed how the young welfare clients prepare for meetings with different institutions in the welfare apparatus. Their experiences are dominating by a contrast in going to a meeting with bureaucratic institutions where they face obligatory meetings with a high degree of institutional expectations and those meetings that are on their behalf where the aim of the contact is to build a relationship with workers whose aim is to build contact.

Their contact with the various institutions and the way they prepare can have severe consequences, thus making them try to prepare accordingly and play roles. These roles are a result of the expectations they face and can be concluded in strategies to show up to meetings as the goal, rather than to prepare for the actual content of the meeting.

In their statements the youth emphasize humor, socializing and everyday-like conversations as their main need of support from the institutions they are in contact with. This is drawn out from their time of preparations and might not include support in other areas or other times in their life as this might change. Receiving help from NAV are identified as important for all the youth, but what is commonly resented is the way they feel before going to a meeting.

It is suggested to develop a more nuanced approach to social work interventions, more so based on aspirations of including youth in their processes rather than the extreme opposition of bureaucratic vs accommodating institutions. One way to do it is to make the youths' everyday work a part of the follow-up that can create an understanding of their place in the social relation. That is to create space for the collaboration between youth and welfare worker to be continuously evaluated and making sure they are both on the same page.

A critical voice could also argue that the contrast to the various institutions could place an even higher demand for service users' responsibility in upholding their own processes, but with the different functions and mandates in mind. Leaving the efforts up to both social workers and youth to find a mutual understanding of each other's 'roles' in the social relation they are a part of. That would take the point of departure in both parties' premises for a good collaboration.

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

Returning to the research question

In this project I have used tools and inspiration from institutional ethnography to investigate how young welfare clients experience meetings with the welfare apparatus. I have done so by taking the point of departure in their everyday actions of how they prepare for a meeting.

The research questions for this project have been:

> *How do young welfare clients prepare themselves for meetings with institutions within the Norwegian welfare apparatus? What kind of 'preparational work' do they do?*

During the analysis, four findings have emerged which illuminates the underlying research question. (1) The findings included that the young welfare clients do extensive and time-consuming preparational work. (2) They mainly prepare to show up to meetings with welfare institutions, especially NAV. (3) The findings showed that the youth prepare mainly in three ways, practical, emotionally and to deal with inner resistance. (4) The amount of and how they prepare vary according to the institutions they are meeting and according to what the youth feel they need to do. The analysis show that when the youth have contact with flexible and accommodating institutions, such as Uteseksjonen, they experienced less need to prepare.

The analysis resulted in a discussion of bureaucratic institutions and their demands with obligations and expectations to being a good client. NAV demand much from them and being in contact often creates feelings of stress and anxiety. The meetings in NAV was perceived to be heavy and burdensome, leaving the youth to develop counter-power practices to balance their everyday accordingly. One such way was to prepare to do something fun after the meeting. The young welfare clients could gain a more balanced collaboration with a bureaucratic system if the conversations were easier going and on the youths' terms. The use of humor was pointed out as an important tool that some outreach workers that resulted in the youth being more comfortable in the meetings. Such a balance could potentially help relieve problems in the involvement of service users that are understood as resistance to social work interventions and goal oriented processes. Moreover, it could reduce the youths' need to do considerable preparational work just to be able to show up to the meeting. Potentially this can provide an opportunity for the youth to focus more on what they want to get out of the meetings, in terms of bringing their case forward.

Doing a study using institutional ethnography as a framework is in itself a contribution to the field of social work. Gaining a deeper understanding for the everyday life of young welfare clients who are in contact with the welfare apparatus gives welfare workers the opportunity to examine their own practices. If we neglect practices and their implications for others, then we cannot expect the young welfare clients to change how they interact with the welfare apparatus.

Further research and implications for practice

Besides these findings, the concept of welfare workers preparations needs further attention. Further research could build on the same point of departure as this, only from the welfare workers standpoint in which examining welfare workers' own preparational work. The aspect elaborated in this thesis is of the young welfare clients, thus given welfare workers' view on service users' preparations before attending meetings, could result in an even greater understanding of the collaborative social relations of service user and welfare worker. The fact that the youth to a lesser degree prepare on the actual content of the meeting and what they want out of it for *their* goal oriented process means that there is potential of supporting them in understanding the demands and expectations from welfare services.

Another aspect to emphasize for both welfare workers and service users is to put more focus on how meetings affects their everyday lives. The youth's preparational work could be a talking point in meetings to address the perceived expectations and how both welfare workers and service users can relate to them. Addressing these issues could potentially raise awareness to stress and unwanted reactions to the interventions that are supposed to help service users in their lives. Directing attention to the everyday implications of interventions could contribute to ease some of the tensions experienced by these young welfare clients, and thus lessen their need for preparing extensively just to be able to show up to the meetings.

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Appendix One – Interview guide

Gratitude
Explaining the purpose of the interview
Explaining what I wish to accomplish with the project
No wrong answers
All information is anonymous
Go through consent form and confirm tape recording

Do you have any questions before we start?

Note to self: I want rich descriptions of everyday activities (preparations). What they do in detail. Away from «script».

Follow-up services – the beginning

o   Can you shortly explain who you are, how old you are and how you got information about this project?

o   What could you say your "status" is at the moment?

o   How long have you been in contact with the welfare apparatus?

o   What type of services or organizations have you had contact with? This could be NAV, bup, etc, but also Ungdom og Fritid, Forandringsfabrikken, ungdomsklubber and similar.

o   How often do you meet a social worker or other employees from these?

Relations

o   How would you characterize your relation to these social workers?

o   Do you find it easy to open up to the social workers?

o   Are there social workers or institutions you have an extra good relationship or collaboration with?

o   Are there anyone who has done something different than you might expect?

o   What would you say is one important thing that could make the relation better?

Meetings and preparations

- o   I want you to think about one or more meetings you have had with a social worker/institution. Do you have or did you have any preparations you did before the meeting?

- o   Do you on a general basis have any preparations/habits/routines that you do when you are going to meet a social worker or when you get a new social worker you are meeting with?

- o   Could you describe specifically what you are doing before you are going to a meeting? (details about everyday activities)

- o   Do you cooperate with anyone before or after a meeting? Friends, family, neighbors etc?

- o   How can different meetings you have, for example with X and X, be different? – Meeting about application for social benefits vs follow-up e.g.

- o   Collaboration with social workers. Do you have any processes or goals that you are working on currently? What are they? Is it in collaboration with social workers or they in control of the progress?

- o   Do you prepare for other things in life?

- o   Do you have habits or routines in general?

- o   How are these meetings affecting your daily life?

- o   What type of feelings do you have before going to a meeting?

Concluding questions

- o   Is there anything you would like to say that we haven't so far talked about?

- o   If there were one thing you could change with the follow-up you receive or have gotten, what would it be?

Appendix Two – Interview guide, follow-up interview

This follow-up interview will be divided in 3 parts. The purpose is to examine the preparations and the contact with the welfare apparatus more concrete.

Part 1 will be that I ask you if you have any questions since last time or something you have thought about/reflected upon.

Do you have any questions or thoughts that you have made up since the last time we met?

Part 2 will be that I give you a list of preparations, then I want you to see if you recognize any of the preparations on there. Preparations is an abstract term and it can help to have something to relate to.

How and why.

The list as conversation starter

What do you do?

How do you do it?

Why do you do it?

Is there anything you would like to add? Something you miss on the list?

Part 3 is a concrete meeting I want you to think about.

Think about a meeting you have been to. It could be long ago, recent or with the basis in a situation you have been in.

Could you go through what you did, step by step, from when you first got the summoning until you were at the meeting?

How did you get summoned to the meeting? How did this affect you?

What did you do next?

Did you receive anything in the mail? Were there just the summoning or anything else?

Are there other documents you have to relate to?

Appendix Three – List of preparations

. Not eating before the meeting

. Make sure to eat before the meeting

. Write down questions, arguments, and things to remember for the meeting

. Make sure that everyone who are going to be at the meeting are summoned

. Check out the social worker or other professionals on social media

. Planning to have someone present at the meeting

. Discuss/og through the meeting with a friend, neighbor, or family before the meeting

. Practice conversation technique

. Cry/be anxious

. Be stressed/worried

. Not talk to anyone about the meeting

. Sleep in/oversleep/make sure to get enough sleep

. Have a friend for a sleepover the night before a meeting

. Pick out outfit the night before/plan what to wear

. Explore/plan the travel route or options for parking at the location for the meeting

. Read case files

. Locate/bring necessary papers

. Ignore/not think about going to the meeting until the meeting is happening

. Do something fun after the meeting to «recover»