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Intervention Tales: Talk, Documents, and "Engagement" on a Wage Subsidy Project

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Abstract Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork on a wage subsidy project for NEETs in London, this article examines how talk and documents are used to make sense of caseloads and clients. The article draws attention to the way that staff account for clients through using "Intervention Tales." The use of these tales provide insights into the routine implementation of labor market interventions. The article describes the work involved in documenting staff-client interactions and selecting which clients to put forward for "live vacancies." The article shows how organizational documents, spreadsheets, and client registration forms are used as resources for assessing "hard to engage" clients during routine activities. In this sense, intervention tales, talk, and documents provide practical resources for organizing ordinary activities, such as segmenting client caseloads and characterizing individual clients.

Keywords Documents; Ethnomethodology; Labor Market Interventions; NEETs; Social Problems Work; Studies of Work

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This article focuses on the methods for coordinating the implementation of a wage subsidy project for 16 to 24 year olds not in education, employment, or training (NEET). By focusing on the practical use of talk and documents during staff meetings, the article draws from ethnographic fieldwork with staff implementing the project to describe how client identities are registered on administrative forms and in talk. The article offers a detailed examination of the way that "so-

cial problems work" requires situated methods for coordinating a shared understanding of caseloads in order to implement employment interventions (Holstein and Miller 1993). These methods are, in Harold Garfinkel's (1967) terms, a "members' resource." The article thereby provides a detailed description of cases whereby the work of delivering labor market interventions and employment related services with NEETs and unemployed youth is done (Miller 1991; Eick 2007; Brodkin and Marston 2013).

As documents are ubiquitous features of bureaucratic organizations, it should be no surprise that in delivering a publicly commissioned employment service, staff are required to document their work during each stage of implementing an employment intervention (Del Rosso and Esala 2015). In one sense, these documents give an overarching, reportable coherence to organizational action, offering up official accounts about what staff did to deliver this employment initiative. However, the coherence of these documents is contingent upon the use of professional, routine methods to make sense of them (Watson 2009). The article contributes to research on ethnomethodological studies of work by describing how labor market interventions are administered through the use of routine, situated methods. This speaks to recent research on the ways that documents and administrative "forms" are used to facilitate "becoming unemployed" (Griffin 2015). Rather than taking a historicist, hermeneutic approach to "decode" an administrative form, the article looks at how documents are used as organizational resources within workplace-specific settings.

In focusing on how work is accomplished through the use of administrative forms, the article also demonstrates how staff use standard documents as a resource in interpreting their client caseload, and how this resource is dependent upon sense-making procedures used during the accomplishment of specific, organizational tasks (Zimmerman 1970; Harper 1998; Drew 2006; Hartswood et al. 2011). By taking an interest in the methods at play in labor market interventions, the case study explicates how staff used documents as a resource to coordinate how they should implement a wage subsidy project through making sense of the client caseload. This work involves formulating stories about clients. The article thereby contributes to an understanding of the practical features of implementing labor market policies, employment interventions, and employment-related services with unemployed, urban youth (Gatta 2014; Boehringer and Karl 2015; Mazouz 2015).

The next section outlines the setting of the case study, followed by an overview of how staff reported that some clients were "hard to engage" on an item of grey literature, a planning spreadsheet called the RAG Report. The third section introduces one specific aspect of the wage subsidy team's work, namely, how staff selected clients to put forward for subsidized vacancies. The fourth section goes into more detail about how this work is accomplished through describing how documents provided a resource to organize the work of selecting clients to put forward for "live vacancies." The article does this by showing how staff made up for the insufficient details on forms by producing "intervention tales" that recount prior interactions with clients.

Researching a Wage Subsidy Project

This article draws from fieldwork with staff implementing a wage subsidy project in an inner London local authority during 2015. The fieldwork took place over nine months in the offices of a local authority-funded, multi-agency network of employment support advisors. The ethnographic fieldwork involved following the work practices of staff members by participating in the routine processes used to work with clients and employers, supplementing these insights with the collection of administrative documents and audio-recordings of team meetings. This approach was used to research how the organization of employment interventions was produced through professional practices, common-sense knowledge, and record-keeping about specific forms of situated action. The majority of the fieldwork took place with the project team within the offices, working alongside other job advisors and project teams, but also involved off-site meetings with employers and local authority staff. The project team, initially composed of two, and then five members of staff, were in charge of delivering an employment project for NEETs.

The article draws from a small number of cases so as to offer a detailed description of how staff members formulate the identity of clients in terms that are relevant to their ongoing project work. These cases are principally drawn from two team meetings with staff members working on a wage subsidy project for NEETs. The article also draws upon participant observation, field notes, and organizational documents, to contextualize the extracts from audio-recordings of two meetings in staff members' routine work practices. The article offers a thorough analysis of a small number of examples—in all, eight clients are discussed in the following transcript extracts—so as to contribute to a literature on social problems work and ethnomethodological studies of work in social service agencies (Zimmerman 1970; Miller 1991; Holstein and Miller 1993). Future research could provide further analysis of the systematic basis of staff members' talk about clients and caseloads.

The project team consisted of two areas of focus, a client-side and an employer-side. This article draws from research focused on the client-side of the project. There were up to three members of staff working on the client-side, and two members on the employer-side. The wage subsidy project was set up in early 2015, and the employment network was awarded a contract to deliver the client-side of the project in partnership with a social enterprise company who would secure vacancies with small- and medium-sized enterprises within the local authority area. The wage subsidy provided up to 50% wage subsidy for a full-time, one year employment contract. In contrast to some other employment or welfare-to-work programs, client participation on the wage subsidy project was not mandatory. Clients would self-refer or be signposted to the team by local social welfare organizations.

Through participant and non-participant observation of the project team's routine work, I shadowed and interviewed staff, clients, employers, and local authority staff, observed different aspects of the project, and collected administrative documents used at the employment network. The following

analysis draws from audio-recordings from two team meetings and one piece of grey literature, an administrative document, the RAG Report. The names of clients mentioned in the transcripts have been anonymized and any details that may be used to identify individual clients have been removed.

Ethnographic research can be used to show the "gap" between official policy designs and its re-creation through actual implementation. In this gap, staff and practitioners interpret how to implement policies within work routines, organizational constraints, and the culture of front-line employment services (Wright 2003). The following analysis makes use of Douglas Maynard's notion of the "limited affinity" between ethnography, ethnomethodology, and conversation analysis. In doing so, the analysis supplements transcripts of team meetings with relevant ethnographic findings (Maynard 2003:73-77). The fieldwork focused on the routine aspects of delivering the wage subsidy project, tracing the different stages of delivery: registering clients, action plan meetings, job clubs, producing job descriptions, reviewing client CVs, submitting client applications, and supporting clients prior to and after interviews, team meetings for project staff, processing payments to employers, producing quarterly monitoring reports on the project team's progress, and so on.

The initial focus of the fieldwork was to understand the ways that staff organized the routine aspects of their work. It came to focus on the way that staff used documentary, record-keeping practices to code the cohort and to select which clients to put forward for vacancies. Staff used a set of standard agency-wide forms to collect relevant details about clients and circulate them to other project teams. Rather than assume that these sources transparently indicated which clients would be appropriate for roles, the work of implementing the project involved making sense of clients and then reporting them on shared documents and during discussions with colleagues. Before the article goes on to describe how staff attempted to find suitable candidates for vacancies, it is necessary to explain the methods used to visualize the client cohort and code some of them as "hard to engage" on a shared administrative document, the RAG Report.

Documenting "Hard to Engage" Clients

One of the project documents used to depict the client caseload was a spreadsheet that staff referred to as the "RAG Report," the acronym standing for Red-Amber-Green. It provided a loosely defined coding procedure that segmented the cohort into categories that were of practical concern for implementation. The Report depicted the cohort by representing the stance that staff would take towards a client's ongoing participation in the project. The Report was open to project staff adding to and amending the color-coding of clients as required. The Report provided a color-coded overview of the cohort, available to staff as an "orientated object" (Garfinkel 2002). This spreadsheet compiled details about clients who had registered with the agency and were referred to the project. By October 2015, around six months after the project started, there were over one hundred and seventy clients represented on the spreadsheet. Staff filled out details by selecting information from the Job Network's

client registration forms, forms completed during action plan meetings, and subsequent contact with clients.

The spreadsheet's headings were: names; job preferences; status & comments; referred by; action plan; development, activities & comments; and other. The colors used to code the report had loose, operative definitions, with the principal colors being: Red for "not work ready"; Amber for "almost job-ready, requires some additional support"; and Green for "job-ready." Additional colors were used to code other members of the cohort. Staff used the color purple for clients who had found employ-

Figure 1. The NEET wage subsidy team's "RAG Report."

Job Preference	Status/ Comments	Referred by	Action Plan	Development	Other
Bike mechanic	B Red		Yes	No longer wishing to participate	
Childcare/ animals	B Red	WOM - Family	Yes	(training program)? Hard to engage	
admin/ airport	B Red	Troubled Families	Yes	could do with more careers advice, work experience	
Retail/ customer service	B Red	(youth charity)	Yes	Taken on Development programme	
retail/ fashion	B Red	Troubled Families	Yes	Referred to Prince's Trust	
Retail/hospitality	B Red	WOM	Yes	Referred client to Inspire	
IT/plumbing/	B Red	Facebook	Yes	Applied for (borough) Apprenticeships	
not sure	B Red	Troubled Families	Yes	Hard to engage - not attending appointments	
not known	B Red	Troubled Families	Yes	Troubled Family - hard to engage	
Animal care	B Red	WOM	Yes	Young Mum - hard to engage not willing to leave child	
Not yet known	Z Working	Not (wage subsidy project)	No	to be contacted for Action planning	Cleint now employeed as a scaffolder

Note: The excel spreadsheet is used to collect information about over one hundred and forty registered clients. All identifying details about clients and local service organizations have been anonymized by replacing text within parentheses. The "client name" column has been removed. "Troubled Families" refers to a government program. "WOM" is an acronym for "word of mouth." The spelling and layout of the rest of the spreadsheet have not been modified.

ment through the project, light blue for clients who found employment outside of the project, a darker blue for clients referred to other teams within the agency, and orange for new clients.

One way that the Report was used by staff to undertake actions on the project was through entering the comment, "hard to engage," on the Report. This was used to describe clients that staff found difficult to enroll in project activities. In one sense, staff used this coding procedure to mark clients who did not exhibit adequate reciprocity during interactions with the project team. In another sense, this designation also signaled that staff had *worked hard* to get this client to participate, but their efforts were not reciprocated.

The comment, "hard to engage," was used in relation to twenty eight "Red" clients on the Report. Of these, fourteen "Red" entries detail that the client is "hard to engage." Four of the fourteen entries took the form of: "Hard to engage—not attending appointments." Three of these comments were verbatim, a forth to similar effect: "Not turning up for appointments, hard to engage." Other entries signaled that a client's status had been or would be effectively cooled, or that they had, or should be, enrolled onto another program. The following illustrative examples are taken from the RAG Report (see: Figure 1).

Comments about "hard to engage" clients were not exclusively applied to clients coded "Red." Over forty other clients had comments to the effect that they were either not participating, not engaging, failed to attend appointments, staff had no phone number on record, staff's phone calls and messages had not been returned, or staff were unable to get in contact. Only in a small number of entries were dates included in the comments section and only in reference to referrals made to other agencies. As a way to segment the caseload, this code did not prevent staff attempting to work with these clients, although, as the article will go on to discuss, staff frequently complained about clients' lack of commitment, being hard to engage, and not reciprocating staff members' efforts to be action-planned or to go for "live vacancies." The following sections will return to the way that variants of the code, "hard to engage," were cited while discussing clients. The next section describes how, as part of implementing the project, staff coordinated among themselves to select which clients to put forward for subsidized vacancies.

Putting Clients in the Mix

As staff met with, spoke to, emailed, texted, and stayed in contact with clients and employers on an ongoing basis, one way to understand the implications of working with clients is through the practice of "putting clients in the mix." This involved the selection of clients to be put forward for subsidized placements, so-called "live vacancies." Part of this selection work involved suggesting potential clients to other project staff. The following extract from a team meeting shows how this work is done by staff members orientated towards "two new people." The first member of staff attempts to do this by citing a prior agreement, without mentioning who the candidates are or making any qualifying assessment about their suitability.

Extract 1. S1-3: staff members

```
1  S1:  uh. so, anyway, so we've got two new people.
2  S2:  okay.
3  S1:  uh, to put forward, and I remember you saying yesterday
4       so we can just fire those straight across.
5  S2:  yeah. fire them (straight).=
6  S1:  =as they come in.
7  S3:  what two new people?
8  S1:  so there was one person that you said about for the online,
9       and that was, what's his name?
10 S3:  Arnold ((surname))?
11 S1:  no. The one with the really, jazzy.
12 S3:  oh, Ezekiel [((surname)).
13 S1:              [Yeah.
14 S2:  oh I recognize that name.
15 S3:  yeah. Yeah he was, he- he was with us at the beginning of
16      the project. young guy, rea::lly kind of um. uhh, creative.
17      um, and he did go for a position but there was some confusion
18      with regards to, him turning up or he couldn't get in.
19 S2:  oh okay.
20 S3:  there was some issue.
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Initially, an agreement is reached that "two new people" can be put in the mix without an elaborated discussion of the client. The agreement is made relevant to a sequentially ordered, future occasion, "as they come in," marking recruitment for a seemingly "distal" cooperative action (Heritage 2016). With these steps, the project team seems to have solidified a prior agreement about what actions to take with two clients.

Although agreement seems to have been reached by line six, another staff member (S3) queries the identity of the "two new people." Once one of their names has been acknowledged through two change of state tokens—"oh"—S3 initiates an account about this clients in terms of their prior involvement on the project (Heritage 1998). This account seems to treat the suggestion of putting this client in the mix as marking potential trouble. By signaling that there may be reasons as to why there may be difficulties working with this client, this extract gives a sense of the way that clients' involvement on the project were displayed in terms of, what we will describe as, *intervention tales*. As accounts, these tales detail the identity of clients in terms of project aims, outcomes, record of previous interactions, impressions of their personality and behavior, their background, and interests in types of vacancies.

These tales also account for the relative knowledge that different members of staff have about members of the caseload. As the staff member suggesting this client was relatively new to the project, S3's account could be treated as: a) informing the staff member that they have already tried to find this client a placement; b) that the staff member should have checked with S3 before making the agreement; c) that there is a history of interactions with this client that they seem to be unaware of; d) that there may be reasons as to why it is difficult to secure a placement for this client. In considering the features and use of these accounts, the next section will look in more depth at the way that prior interactions with clients, which are not recorded on administrative forms, are delivered as reportable descriptions after standard, administrative documents are glanced over.

The Use of Intervention Tales and Client Forms

In order to present further details about the use of intervention tales, the article draws from audio-recordings of a meeting between two members of staff and myself. The meeting was called so as to identify which of the current list of registered clients would be suitable to put forward for the "live vacancies." One staff member mentioned that they were also trying to become more familiar with the client co-

hort through reviewing a ring-bound folder of clients' administrative forms.

These extracts also show that it is not possible to adequately understand the descriptor "hard to engage" in terms of etymological definitions nor in reference to administrative documents used by the project team. Instead, as a designation, it constituted an interpretive resource through which to index the project-relevant characteristics of a client. As J. William Spencer (2001:159) has detailed, the institutional identity of clients in receipt of human services is dependent upon the way that an "institutional discourse provides the conditions of possibility for constructing persons and their troubles." In order to make sense of how descriptions were used to review clients for vacancies, it is necessary to focus on how staff cited details from documentary sources and memories of prior encounters. These recollections were not systematically recorded on standard forms or the agency-wide, digital record-keeping system, the Network Register. In this sense, the notion of intervention tales provides a way to describe how project staff, in the words of Rick Hood (2016), actually talk about complex cases.

Staff worked through a folder of client registration forms by producing descriptions about clients' suitability in terms of their qualifications, work experience, age, preference for types of roles, demeanor, manner, behavior, attitude, and as a member of a generational group. These attributes were used to focus upon clients' displays of commitment to the project objectives. On the table in front of the two staff members and myself was a large folder in which staff collected all the forms used on the project. The bulk of the folder contained completed client registration forms, action plans, a copy of the RAG Report, and other project documents. As staff talked, they read client forms, placing them on piles corresponding to the vacancies and possible referrals to other organizations.

The new project manager worked through the alphabetically ordered folder of client documents, pulling out forms, inspecting additional handwritten notes. The other member of staff explained how they used different "systems" to annotate the forms. The project manager, she said, "has her system…when I put the forms on Network Register, I put highlighters through, otherwise I'll put them on three times and it just goes through my mind…so I always put a highlighter through." This different "system" also distinguished which members of the project team had registered, action planned, and updated the clients' database record. There were a number of distinguishing marks, that is, handwritten notes, annotations, post-it notes, and recommendations written in the margins and the verso side of the form. Such addenda compensated for, what Moore and colleagues (2011:185-186) refer to as, the "chronic insufficiency of standard forms."

Staff approached the selection work through a binary rationale. For the task at hand, clients are either possible candidates or not. In none of the cases were there "maybes." Where there was uncertainty over a clients' suitability, rather than offering a judgment in the form of "yes" or "no" utterances, they collaboratively produced descriptions of clients so as to resolve what to do with this client. This was done on

a case by case basis. This talk also displays a shared orientation to the clients as members of a cohort accountable to expectations of conduct, current employment status, and having expressed a preference for types of employment. The staff's work involved treating clients as unavailable through a set of related glosses which indicated a shared understanding of what they meant for the present task. These glosses included: "is working," "has a job," "got a job," "unavailable," "disengaged," "off the radar," "is out," "is going to college," "part of Troubled Families," "very hard to engage," "does not engage," "he's done," "not eligible," and so on. Whilst all of these terms indicate a different set of circumstances, each descriptor orientates the conversation towards an interpretative justification as to why, for the task at hand, the client cannot be considered as a potential candidate.

In the following two extracts, this also involved producing intervention tales that are sequentially organized descriptions of previous encounters between staff and the client under discussion. These tales invoke prior encounters to display how clients have conducted themselves during interactions with staff. These tales display how staff had instructed clients, how these instructions had been acted upon, what moral assessments to make of these staff-client interactions, and how other actors are drawn into the employment intervention. In searching for clients to put forward for vacancies, this next extract shows staff members' orienting to a quick succession of clients who are not selected as candidates. For these cases, the two members of staff skimmed through a set of negative cases that result from a set of disparate descriptions.

Extract 2. S1-2: staff members

S1: uh Keith, he's disengaged. Didn't he?
S2: mm. What else did he want, ((S1's name))?
S1: he just wanted something outside.
driver's mate. ((employer name))?
S2: they're- they've shortlisted.
S1: okay. Well that's good anyway. Lucy is out, she's
got her job. Marnie ((surname)), is there any
point in putting her forward again?
S2: uh:::m. I would say no at this point, just purely
because she's already had interviews there.
S1: yeah.
S2: and if we can manage to, get a new day sorted out,
it's- I just feel that it would be a waste of her time
and I just don't want her to be put through that to
get a no again.
S1: Matthew, we got him a job.
S2: yeah.
S1: Marvin ((surname)).
S2: Marvin works.
S1: he's got a job?
S2: yeah. He was the guy with the really deep voice.
um, he works in construction.
S1: oh I remember him now. Yeah.

The first client, Keith, is "disengaged," available for work, but given his preference for "something outside," is only treated as eligible for a vacancy that has been "shortlisted." This first case goes against the notion that "disengaged" clients are dismissed as unsuitable for candidate status. We can see that S2 acknowledges S1's question about Keith having "disengaged," then re-orients towards what roles Keith was seeking. The inquiry is not settled until staff answer "what else did he want." Three clients are then briefly surveyed, each of whom are working. Though each of these clients is employed, the attributes of the job are marked by different lexical attributions of how the job was found: "got her job," "got him a job," "he's got a job."

Marnie presents a different subject for discussion. In her case, we can see another feature of how inter-

vention tales are used by staff to detail the reasons for and against putting clients forward for roles. As "she has already had interviews there," the staff member provides a reason for not granting candidate status to Marnie. The justification that "I just feel like it would be a waste of her time" seems to indicate the assumption that this employer will not come to a different decision this time around. In this case, an intervention tale contains consequential details about previous interactions with clients, giving grounds for what actions should be taken in the present and future, joined to displays that account for a client's time and the way that employers make decisions about hiring applicants. None of these details are to be found on the client's registration form. Each of these quick-fire citations of client names resembles condensed versions of end-of-shift "handoff routines" in health practice. LeBaron and colleagues (2016) describe how physicians' "handoffs" involve the work of coordinating sequentially organized, embodied talk. The authors show how physicians' actions coordinate "handoffs" through a flexible, negotiated ordering of "moves." This flexible set of moves may involve the patient's name, family matters, adjacent patients, major issues, past events, and so on.

Intervention tales are thus not solely concerned with ensuring compliance with organizational rules and project policies. Instead, they account for what has happened with individual clients in a series of encounters and in ways that are intelligible to the relevant concerns of implementing the project. In this sense, they resemble what Albert Meehan (1986) has described as a "running record." Meehan describes how police officers keep track of routine interactions with juveniles that are left unrecorded in log books. This running record is treated by police officers as a shared resource for interpreting and justifying future interactions with juveniles in the context of professional and organizational expectations. On the wage subsidy project, although clients are not required to undertake mandatory actions like attending the offices on a routine basis, their ongoing participation is dependent upon, among other perceived characteristics, "being available" when opportunities arise and staying in contact with staff. The following intervention tale shows how staff work together to interpret how a client has comported herself, and by doing so finds the basis upon which to justify whether or not to put them forward for vacancies. In this way, staff account for clients in ways that are unrecorded on standard forms or the record-keeping system, but can draw from these sources in order to do interpretive work.

As staff flicked through a folder of client documents, what these intervention tales afford is an interpretive resource to decide *who* is suitable for vacancies. This work makes reference to clients' current employment status, as well as perceptions over their conduct and receptivity to staff members' advice and instructions. In this way, intervention tales display a sense-making practice of just how a client's ongoing participation in the project should be configured. These tales treat prior interactions as one source of evidence about clients. Although the notion of discretion cannot fully explain how staff apply their judgment through attentiveness to specific circumstantial details, by analyzing the following extract, the article

describes how discretion is accomplished by "citing evidence" from documentary records, registration forms, and through reciting prior encounters with clients.

This last extract shows how staff work to identify who Rosanna is, leading to affective expressions of annoyance and a moral injunction for this client to display "willingness."

Extract 3. S1-2: staff members

```
S1:  Rosanna. um, do you remember Rosanna?
S2:  let's have a look at her ((inaudible)). Oh::: yes
     I do I think, I think she came down with Devin.
S1:  no.
S2:  no?
S1:  was it her? Because I saw her and I didn't ((inaudible))
     the action plan for her. Yes it was.
S2:  it was.
S1:  she couldn't open, yeah.
S2:  she, I think she's going to college isn't she?
S1:  she's not doing anything. But I, and I-, I spoke to- I
     spoke to Devin about her and he said oh she's still
     not doing nothing and I told- I advised her to come
     back to you. I said yeah, anytime. Just that I need to hear,
     you know.
S2:  mmm.
S1:  show me some willingness.
S2:  absolutely.
S1:  it's just a case of sitting down here for half an hour,
     forty five [minutes]
S2:             [Yeah]
S1:  and I'm not actually getting anything back,
     so I [couldn't see as ((inaudible)).]
S2:       [No, she'll be out of work.]
S2:  what, what- what was she looking for ((staff name))?
S1:  she was looking for:: it was, retail. Childcare.
     um hospitality or admin.
S2:  put her in the hospitality pile.
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The staff initially work together to clarify Rosanna's identity. This is collaboratively accomplished by asking to see the action plan form, venturing a guess that is disconfirmed, and then again referring to the action plan form. "Yes it was," marks alignment in who they are talking about. One of the staff suggests that the client is going to college, which is contested in the next turn in which an intervention tale is launched. This tale is used to display an appraisal of how the staff member's offer for the client to get in contact was responded to. This offer contrasts with the version of what the client is doing provided by Devin, an advisor at a partner organization who refers clients to the team. He is reported to have said that the client is "doing nothing." The tale builds the case that, as Rosanna is "doing nothing," she should be getting in contact. "Doing nothing," on this occasion, generates a context in which to interpret Rosanna's inaction as a lack of reciprocal engagement. The description provides an appraisal of whether the client meets the project criteria of "out of work" and what to make of the client's conduct because, although they are "doing nothing," they still have not stayed in contact.

Appraising the client in this way makes a general expectation about client conduct partly visible by stating the need for clients to reciprocate staff members' efforts to stay in contact: "Just that I need to hear." It also provides grounds for calling upon the other staff member to agree for the need for this client to "show me some willingness." Given these considerations at play in the intervention tale, and whilst this client may seem to be "hard to engage," the orientation towards retrieving "what she was looking for" from the client's form leads to the client name being put in the mix. As S2 instructs, "put her in the hospitality pile."

Readers can see in this extract that the two staff members are using the occasion to organize the client caseload into "piles," that is, the hospitality pile that Rosanna's forms are placed on. The staff

members inspect each of the documents to locate information that was noted during an intake meeting. This information on this administrative form is, in Andrew Carlin's (2003) terms, available "at-a-glance." And yet, in Rosanna's case, staff members turn to the document in line twenty five to search for one piece of information, "what was she looking for." The document and the intervention tales are thereby both used as resources for the accomplishment of this routine sorting of clients to put forward for "live vacancies."

This last extract has sought to describe the routine interplay of talk and documents in deciding on how to organize the client caseload. The analysis of a small number of cases has shown how intervention tales constitute a flexible resource that staff members use to formulate historical details about their contact with members of the client caseload. The fact that these tales are told in the course of meetings where staff members practically decide how to implement the project is instructive for researchers interested in social problems work. For one, these tales are used to describe client actions and characteristics in ways that are not locatable on organizational documents. The use of tales is, however, also prompted by the "chronic insufficiency of standard forms" (Moore et al. 2011:185), and what does not need to be included in organizational records. Each of the examples used in the article have shown how these tales are used to display clients' "engagement" with the project.

The use of these tales constitute routine aspects of the work of implementing the wage subsidy project. In the present cases, the tales are principally used to show how a client has been seen to respond to staff requests, requirements, and advice. The tales evidence how staff members have sought to initiate interventions with specific clients by, for example, offering interviews, or inviting clients to attend Action Plan sessions. Clients are accountable when they are seen not to reciprocate these intervention efforts. This lack of reciprocity and "engagement" is located within intervention tales to evidence "some issue" with a client. These tales thereby offer a resource for staff with which to display issues about clients. The issues may be a "lack of reciprocity," they may involve a client "wanting something outside" of the project, or that a client has already had a previous interview, which means offering a new one would be a "waste of her time." As such, intervention tales are a practical resource for staff members to describe a client, to show the rational basis for staff members' stances, to add to staff members' shared knowledge of the client caseload, and as evidence for deciding whether to select or not select clients to "put them in the mix" and put them forward for interviews.

Concluding Remarks

The article has addressed the topic of how labor market interventions, such as a wage subsidy project, are implemented through ordinary activities. I have addressed this topic by showing how members of staff distinguish between clients registered with a multi-agency network of employment support advisors. This team kept records on the registered client caseload and decided which clients to put forward for "live vacancies." The article has described some aspects of the routine work that staff

undertake to arrive at these decisions. I have drawn from ethnographic fieldwork, administrative documents, and audio-recordings of talks between staff so as to show how these decisions were arrived at during two team meetings. Future research could offer a larger number of cases for analysis. The present article has identified a specific practice that staff use to get this work done, which the article has referred to as intervention tales. These tales are used to make sense of clients given the insufficiency of standard administrative forms. These tales involve members of staff recounting prior encounters with clients that are not documented on administrative forms, and formulating how these prior encounters are relevant to a client's "organizational identity." This identity is formulated in terms that are relevant to specific, practical tasks, that is, "putting clients in the mix" for "live vacancies." These intervention tales are used to evidence what staff have noticed about a client's, for instance, reciprocity towards staff members' efforts. They seem to answer the question, "Is this client sufficiently engaged with our project?" These tales are thereby used as a resource to provide a rational basis in staff members' efforts to make sense of clients as accountable, potential job candidates. These tales resemble a set of "formula stories," specifically akin to those stories that Donileen Loseke (2007:670-672) has called "organizational narratives."

These intervention tales are produced by members of staff to describe members of the project's client caseload. These clients are not solely assessed according to their demographic information or details that are codified as "client eligibility requirements." Indeed, a clients' lack of reciprocal engagement with staff members is a practical concern for how the project should be implemented. A client's conduct—that is, their engagement, reciprocity, willingness, and not having caused issues—and staff members' ongoing obligation to that client, is the object being formulated in intervention tales. Extracts from transcripts of team meetings have been used to show how members of staff use intervention tales as a "members' resource" alongside collections of organizational documents, such as the "RAG Report" and client registration forms.

The article has aimed to contribute to the literature on social problems work and ethnomethodological studies of work in social service agencies, by describing how members of staff implement a wage subsidy project for NEETs through the use of talk and documents. Members of staff use talk and record-keeping practices to make sense of the client caseload, and in turn, use these representations as resources for interpreting how to work with clients in the course of ordinary activities. NEETs and unemployed youth in receipt of employment services or enrolled on training projects are thereby accountable in terms of their exhibited, noticeable, commentable, describable actions and inactions. In this sense, the focus of the article has been on explicating a "members' resource" used to accomplish routine work tasks. By showing how staff code clients as "hard to engage" on an administrative document, the RAG Report, the article has shown that one way that staff make the client caseload intelligible is through segmenting the group into different categories corresponding with a set of colors. The article developed this point of coding and categorization by showing how staff made sense of whether

to select "hard to engage" clients for "live vacancies." When it comes to this aspect of implementing the project, staff members accounted for some clients through intervention tales. The descriptor of "hard to engage" found in an administrative document, the RAG Report, does not determine whether, in each case, staff will or will not put clients in the mix. Rather than treating administrative documents as representations of work or organizational realities, researchers are recommended to consider how talk and documents come to be put to use as resources that facilitate the undertaking of social problems work with NEETs and other recipients of employment and training services.

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