

# **Defensive accountings**

An ethnomethodological study of clients' resistance practices in  
vocational rehabilitation encounters

Janne Solberg

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University of Oslo, Norway

Department of Sociology and Human Geography

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## Transcription symbols

The data extracts in this dissertation are transcribed in accordance with the transcript system developed by Gail Jefferson. Here is Charles Antaki's account of the most used signs:

(.)	Just noticeable pause
(.3), (2.6)	Examples of timed pauses
↑word,↓word	Onset of noticeable pitch rise or fall (can be difficult to use reliably).
A: word [word B: [word	Square brackets aligned across adjacent lines denote the start of overlapping talk. Some transcribers also use "]" brackets to show where the overlap stops.
.hh, hh	in-breath (note the preceding fullstop) and out-breath respectively.
wo(h)rd	(h) is a try at showing that the word has "laughter" bubbling within it.
wor-	A dash shows a sharp cut-off.
wo:rd	Colons show that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound.
(words)	A guess at what might have been said if unclear.
( )	Unclear talk. Some transcribers like to represent each syllable of unclear talk with a dash.
A: word= B:=word	The equals sign shows that there is no discernible pause between two speakers' turns or, if put between two sounds within a single speaker's turn, shows that they run together.
<u>word</u> , WORD °word°	Underlined sounds are louder, capitals louder still material between "degree signs" is quiet.
>word word< <word word>	Inwards arrows show faster speech, outward slower.
→	Analyst's signal of a significant line.
((sniff))	Transcriber's effort at representing something hard, or impossible, to write phonetically.

<http://homepages.lboro.ac.uk/~ssca1/notation.htm>

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## 1. Introduction

This dissertation explores in an empirical fashion how clients of vocational rehabilitation participate in the process of negotiating individual action plans, and especially how clients adopt various accounting practices to resist the counsellor's projects (see Section 1.3). For this purpose fifteen vocational rehabilitation encounters in NAV (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) were audio-recorded and analysed in an ethnomethodological framework. "Accounting practices" is in this respect not a technical term, but an umbrella term for mundane phenomena like describing, reporting, telling, assessing, explaining and so on, (that is, ordinary activities, which, during a day, most people take part in). By means of conversational practices, clients "portray their ordinary actions, practices, and relationships to others"(Buttny 1993: 15), and, as this dissertation demonstrates, the practices represent available and efficient resources for accomplishing a variety of actions (proposing, accounting, arguing a case). Hopefully, the study will add to our knowledge of clients' accounting practices, their capacity to resist the professionals' moves and thereby influence how the interaction unfolds.

As the scholarship from Vestfold University College, funding this project, was announced under the heading "User participation in NAV", a client focus was desired. Now terms like user participation are frequently adopted in policy documents as well as in academic books written for professionals and students. But in contrast to normative approaches, interactionally oriented research has recommended to ask what participation means (Collins 2007: 15). This suggests to dig into what Goffman (1983) called the "interaction order", an order that has organization on its own only loosely coupled with the macro needs of society (Zimmerman 1998: 87) which are expressed in official objectives, plans, legislation etc. With this open approach, it is possible to learn how the participants themselves manage the issue of how to behave in situ. In research terms this suggests what the anthropologist Kenneth Pike called an "emic viewpoint", studying behaviour from inside the system", which is in contrast to an "etic viewpoint" which uses criteria outside the system (Have 2007: 34). Thus, the ambition of this study was to unravel what happens in the interaction order for its own sake, rather than, for instance, adopting a policy concern to improve NAV's follow-up services.

## 1.1 Ethnomethodology: How is clienthood “done”?

Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (CA) can provide empirical knowledge of how institutional roles are accomplished in situ by the participants themselves, on a turn-by-turn basis. Most importantly, the ethnomethodological framework does not assume that the client needs to be *made* active, and that clienthood, without facilitating structures, is something passive. Instead ethnomethodology challenges the sociological thinking about social roles as constituted “from top”, as in Parson’s account of the sick-role (Parsons 1951). Instead, the client is deemed as inevitably active and as displaying a competent understanding of what is going on, even in scenes where participation has not been facilitated by the professional the way it should. By developing Goffman’s idea on the interaction order, ethnomethodology assumes meaning to be intersubjectively “emergent” rather than institutionally fixed (Rawls 1989a: 13). This suggests that the analysis of institutional encounters should not start from established theories on how clients and professionals “are” (structural or psychological<sup>1</sup> properties). Instead, the client-professional encounter is assumed to be largely self-organized in terms of arranging the stream of activities as commonplace and intelligible, that is, accountable (Garfinkel 1967: 33).

The mentioned emic orientation implies that ethnomethodological studies do not ironize about members’ accounts, (see Berard 2005), but share the members’ concern of “what is going on”. In a study of the NAV-reform, a leader of a local NAV-office complained about NAV’s follow-up model by saying it “is fine with arrows and all. But it says nothing about what is going on inside the arrows” (Klemsdal 2009: 183). This utterance nicely illustrates that despite models and theory on good practice handed “from top”, there is no ready recipe for participants to follow since rules do not provide for their own application in social interaction (Jayyusi 1991). Instead members have to utilize their shared common-sense knowledge in accomplishing social activities. In Heritage’s phrasings, ethnomethodology’s object of study is:

(..) the body of common-sense knowledge and the range of procedures and considerations by means of which the ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves”(Heritage 1984a: 4).

Within this framework, accounting practices represent the enabling resources of a common culture, rather than being the offspring of a creative human nature or a resisting body (Wrong 1961)). According to Rawls, human interpretation is “not a matter of personal choice at all, but rather a matter of mutual commitment to shared social expectations which are used in

concert in order to negotiate a meaningful social outcome” (Rawls 1985: 127). Thus, when the term “resistance” is adopted in this dissertation, it is not as a strategic or psychological notion since it primarily refers to common, cultural resources for accomplishing mundane actions.

In being oriented to how observable activities are “done”, ethnomethodology, and especially conversation analysis, are suggested to have a certain behaviourist twist (Silverman 1998: 62). This would hardly be a sufficient approach to investigate clients’ subjective experience or inner feelings in welfare encounters. But again, explicating methods (from outer conduct), this is not the kind of issues ethnomethodology tries to address. Nevertheless, it is here believed that also *showing* conduct can contribute to a “greater awareness of clients” (Offer 1999) and their everyday dilemmas, albeit in ways different from phenomenological oriented research on this setting (Berge 2007; Nordrik 2008; Pehrson 2007).

## **1.2 Negotiating action plans**

This study started up in an early phase of the NAV-reform, and since Aetat [the name of the former employment office] partly worked as the model case for NAV’s follow-up services, the field of vocational rehabilitation appeared as a good choice for investigating the negotiation of individual action plans. Within this programme, working out “tailor-made” action plans had long been an established casework practice (Møller, Flermoen, and Løyland 2003). Actually, in an early study almost 90 per cent of the employment offices (Aetat) reported that action plans were made in all vocational rehabilitation cases (Møller, Flermoen, and Løyland 2003). Formulating concrete aims and employment measures is thought to establish a division of responsibilities and secure predictability in the rehabilitation process (Hernes, Heum, Haavorsen, and Saglie 2010: 219), and making plans are thus deemed as a sign of quality. Survey data suggests that clients’ satisfaction is larger in cases where action plans are made, than if not (Hansen 2005; Møller, Flermoen, and Løyland 2003), though this overall picture has been shaded by interview data suggesting otherwise. Møller et al.(2003) found that many clients were very satisfied with being given the responsibility for making an action plan “but there were also some who had experienced this as very demanding, and believed that they received too little support” (Møller, Flermoen, and Løyland 2003: 64).

But although making plans has become routine in many welfare settings, we still do not know enough about how they actually are “talked-into-being”, and this thesis adds to our understanding of how services are planned and negotiated in welfare encounters. This means

to examine the counsellor-client interaction at one particular stage in the welfare trajectory. Based on Kristoffersen (2008) and St.melding nr. 9 (2006-2007) the welfare trajectory of vocational rehabilitation can be laid out in the following way:

- 1) *Benefit phase*: Earlier phase(s) of health-related benefits such as illness benefit and medical rehabilitation money.
- 2) *Executive phase*: From applying for vocational rehabilitation until the benefit is granted.
- 3) *Clarifying phase*: Assessing different actions, to be put into an action-plan.
- 4) *Action phase*: Participation in employment measures, decided in the third phase.
- 5) *Job-seeking phase*: When the vocational rehabilitation is completed and the client becomes an ordinary job-seeker.

The client's need for close follow-up services from NAV is believed to be largest in the third stage of planning and in the first phase of the action phase, since other agents, such as employers and external organizers, often are involved in carrying out the planned measures (Hernes, Heum, Haavorsen, and Saglie 2010: 224). Moreover, since about one third of the clients of vocational rehabilitation will be granted a disability pension, the rehabilitation might of course have a quite different endpoint than ordinary job-seeking, and this research project focus on the interaction in the third stage of "clarifying", before this sorting is done.

More specific, the studies in this dissertation seek to explicate and understand the realization of institutional key activities in vocational rehabilitation encounters. That is, planning sequences, where the counsellor and the client propose and negotiate goals and employment measures to be put into the client's action plan (whatever later outcomes). The overall pattern of the recorded encounters was then typical: Greetings → introduction → (mapping) → proposal → discussion → conclusion → closing. In this dissertation the middle phase, where solutions are proposed and discussed, will be analysed as a negotiation process (Maynard 2010), producing particular outcomes or services (Linell and Fredin 1995: 301). The need to account is here closely related to solution proposing activities: If the client makes a proposal, it is the counsellor's acceptance/decision that is pursued through the client's accountings. And contrary, when the counsellor makes suggestions, it is the counsellor who needs to account to gain the client's consent.

Proposing appropriate employment measures/goals and accounting for them are important since these activities provide the very "basis" (Firth 1995) for coming to terms with the

content of an action plan. However, as documented in the research tradition analysing “institutional talk”(Drew and Heritage 1992), the terms of negotiating are still somewhat special.

In their paper on trouble description in citizens’ calls to the police Whalen & Zimmerman note that usually there is a stronger accountability demand in institutional settings than in everyday settings, where descriptions usually are accepted as veridical for the purposes at hand (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990: 465). However, the accountability demand very much differs between different kinds of institutional encounters as well. According to Whalen et al (1988) there are two distinguished types of service encounters. In type I, such as ordering a pizza or a taxi the “need” for the request is usually not questioned, which is contrary to type II where the validity of the request needs to be established before a service might possibly be provided (such as in emergency calls). Since services of vocational rehabilitation rarely can be demanded, but rather need to be accounted for (to be accepted by the counsellor), the interaction treated in this study belongs to the type II kind.

Within the type II encounter the professional’s interrogatives can display a “testing” orientation to the client’s pursue of services (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990). Possibly, the right-based benefit system of vocational rehabilitation (see Section 2) suggests that “the money issue” is not as openly negotiated as described in social security encounters (Hydén 1999; Rostila 1997). But according to legislation, vocational rehabilitation plans must nevertheless be approved as “appropriate” and “necessary” by the counsellor (see section 2). This suggests that also counsellors of vocational rehabilitation might display an investigative orientation and examine the proposal’s institutional relevance by introducing issues such as health, motivation, abilities and labour-market etc. To the reflexive client, this means that the negotiation of plans takes place in an environment of contingency, so that even if the client is free to make proposals etc., the client also “knows” that the counsellor needs to be convinced before an action plan is settled.

### **1.3 Research issues: Exploring the dilemmas of clienthood**

This dissertation addresses how clients of vocational rehabilitation actually contribute in the negotiation of action plans by utilizing various accounting practices. Especially, how can accounting practices be a resource to actively resist the counsellor’s interactional project? Descriptions have been depicted as a rich resource for doing productive actions, not least managing conflict or sensitive issues (Potter 1996). In this study the “defensive” functions of

accounts will be given closer examination as the counsellor's eliciting and investigative inquiries might produce interactional dilemmas that need to be managed to avoid threats to the client's case and perhaps even social face (Goffman 1967b). Thus, it is here suggested that mundane accounting practices such as describing and reporting might be a way to balance the need to be accountable as a good client while negotiating items of different sorts (the services, the client's moral self and the terms of talking).

The dissertation is based on the following four articles:

- I. *Accepted and resisted: the client's responsibility for making proposals in activation encounters*. Janne Solberg. Published in *Text & Talk*, 31:733-752, 2011.
- II. *Activation Encounters: Dilemmas of Accountability in Constructing Clients as 'Knowledgeable'*. Janne Solberg. Published in *Qualitative Social Work*, 10:381-398, 2011.
- III. *Making sense of accounting practices: Clients' reports of abandoned plans in Norwegian activation encounters*. Janne Solberg (in review).
- IV. *Arguing in professional-client encounters: Building cases through second-hand assessments*. Janne Solberg. Accepted on 12 December 2013 for publication in *Pragmatics & Society*.

The research issue for each study will be presented below with a bit more context.

### **1.3.1 Managing contingencies**

Research from medical rehabilitation encounters suggest that clients are seldom asked to make proposals in goal-planning although professional standards prescribe so (Barnard, Cruice, and Playford 2010; Parry 2004).

In contrast to these findings, most of the clients of vocational rehabilitation examined in this study, are induced to participate actively in making an individual action plan by suggesting solutions. That is, formulate a plan or at least provide an idea in response to the counsellor's solution eliciting question. The use of eliciting questions suggest that the client is given the responsibility for formulating a proposal/idea, or more precise, in Stevanovic and Peräkylä terms the client is thereby given "deontic authority" to determine how the world "ought to be" (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2012: 298). These practices are meant to facilitate the client's active participation, albeit from a more Foucaultian approach they might be deemed as just another variant of "responsibilization" (Clarke 2005). But even so there are practical

issues to be managed for the client, which deserve analytic attention. By proposing an option in the answer-slot the client accepts the distribution of (deontic) responsibility, but, as demonstrated in article I there exists different ways for doing so which can convey how clients implicitly understand their chances for (in the end) having their proposal accepted.

Thus, in real time interaction, there often is (rational) doubt about whether the client's proposal will be accepted or not (For both parts!). The dilemmatic situation might in this instance be formulated as the client's situated concern to comply and thus make suggestions, while not knowing for sure whether his option eventually will be accepted by the counsellor:

*How do clients comply with the institutional request to formulate proposals? How can nonalignment with the eliciting question be understood as managing particular contingencies within the setting of vocational rehabilitation?*

Clients' ways of proposal-making can display how contingencies associated with this kind of decisions are understood and managed in the talk. By choosing designs (see Section 3.2) that overtly orient to the matter in question as contingent, clients orient to themselves as more or less entitled to have certain services (Curl and Drew 2008; Heinemann 2006). Moreover, the client's proposal in second position is vulnerable to challenges given the counsellor's evaluation in the third position (Hutchby 1996; Vehviläinen 2001), or even rejection, which is a much face-threatening event. This suggests that in practice the client's (deontic) right to make proposals needs to be carefully balanced with the counsellor's (potentially stronger) right to make decisions.

### **1.3.2 Managing accountability issues**

Professionals' questions addressing morally sensitive topics, such as economics or illness (Hydén 1996), might threaten clients' moral selves. However, this trouble goes beyond the issue of "sensitive topics". The second study of this dissertation addresses how even solution eliciting questions (facilitating clients to be active) have a moral dimension which clients need to attend to. Of course, according the official line it was alright that clients did not have solutions to suggest, at least this is what a client was told in the beginning of one of the recorded encounters: "And if you sort of do not have a plan by now and so on, it is quite okay". But this pep talk statement, "equalizing" clients without concrete plans, just didn't work. Facing an eliciting question somewhat later in the conversation, the client sounded "uncomfortable" and she was not alone in adopting accounting elements, excusing or justifying (Scott and Lyman 1968), a not very substantial answer.

The client's deontic and epistemic authority are here intertwined (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2012: 298) and at stake since, in real life, clients do not always know how things ought to be. The expectation for speakers to know varies with what kind of knowledge that is involved. Pomerantz distinguished between so called type-1 and type-2 "knowables". Type-1 are knowables that subject-actors have rights and obligations to know, like one's name and what one is doing. Type-2 knowables are those that subject-actors are assumed to have access to by being occasioned, for instance where your friend is (Pomerantz 1980: 187f). People are in general more responsible for answering questions of the type-1 kind than the latter (Keevallik 2011: 196).

This study examines how 'not knowing' might be morally loaded (Bergmann 1998: 290) on behalf of the speaker (see Section 3.4). The professional's solution-eliciting question treats the client of vocational rehabilitation as being capable to report on possible ideas and plans. Consequently, the client's situated dilemma might be put as portraying herself adequately as a "good" or "active" client although she does not have plans/ideas to report:

*How do counsellors' eliciting questions set up expectations of what clients are supposed to know regarding possible solutions? How do clients align to these expectations, and how are issues of accountability managed in their responses?*

Misalignment with the counsellor's eliciting question might imply what Goffman called an "incident" causing problems for the client's face or moral self (see Section 3.4), and the analysis of the second study demonstrates how this threat to proper client accountability is practically managed.

### **1.3.3 Managing misalignment problems**

The interaction in the discussion phase can be described as "negotiations," where both parties try to mould a shared understanding fitting their own definition of the situation (Arminen 2005). The third interactional dilemma, mostly treated in article III and IV, is occasioned within sequences where the parties are negotiating the appropriateness of proposed options. As mentioned, proposed employment measures must be considered "appropriate" and "necessary" to be approved, and the counsellor often asks questions or even "interrogative series" to scrutinize or test the institutional relevance of the proposal (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990). Such question-answer sequences have an institutional "purpose", ensuring that the proposal and the eventual decision appear "visibly-rational- and- reportable-for -all-practical- purposes" (Garfinkel 1967). Article III deals with clients who have suggestions to



protect and who need to manage the counsellor's talk about alternative plans. Accountings are in this respect an essential resource for the client to resist and counter the realities inherent or presumed in the counsellor's investigative actions.

Albeit the image of the "negotiating client" appears to be well aligned with present discourses on active user participation, the client's misaligning actions might represent a threat to the social relation (Heritage 1984b) and perhaps outcomes as well (since the client's proposal depends upon the counsellor's approval). As will be more explained in more depth in Section 3, professionals' inquiries establish a local pressure or a preference for conversational alignment, which suggests misalignment to be an accountable (and potential troublesome) action. Thus, it is interesting to find out how the client in practical terms solves the issue of misaligning with the counsellor's project of considering alternative options. In article III the practice of reporting an earlier considered proposal (abandoned at the moment of speaking) is suggested as one way of dealing with the problem:

*How do clients formulate "abandoned proposals" in vocational rehabilitation encounters? How can abandoned proposals be invoked to misalign with the counsellor's investigating agenda? What are their interactional functions?*

The client's practice of reporting "abandoned proposals" is seen as a resource to resist the counsellor's investigating agenda, and it will be examined how this practice is organized and what is accomplished in terms of arguing cases and realizing situated social identities.

#### **1.3.4 Managing insufficient knowledge**

While negotiating their case, clients might from time to time invoke the voice of non-present third parties, how come? In Goffman's (1981) vocabulary a speaker can participate with different speaker roles: As "animator", the speaker is the sound box, as "author", the speaker is the author of the words spoken, and as a "principal", the speaker is the person being committed by the talk. Sacks (1992) had similar ideas when he referred to the scene of a child who comes into a grocery store saying "My mother told me to buy a dozen eggs" as a prototype of the device "an adult said to do it", which suggests that some actor other than the doer "is the competent individual in the case." Saying another person told me to do it implies suggesting that the speaker is not the "author" of the message, only the much less accountable "messenger" (Goffman 1981). As described in article IV much research is done under the heading of reported speech, which tends to see the talk of non-present, third parties as a

device for reducing the speaker's accountability (for doing a contingent or morally questionable action). Albeit this research certainly is not mistaken, it will here be argued that in other cases the use of second-hand accounts might have a more argumentative function.

From the client's perspective, negotiations might be difficult, not only because of the trouble of disagreeing or the contingency of the services, but epistemic *access* to the topics being discussed might be a problem as well. Following Labov and Fanshel's (1977) classification, it is often assumed that knowledge is more or less shared among speakers:

- A-events: Known to A, but not to B.
- B-events: Known to B, but not to A.
- AB-events: Known to both A and B.
- O-events: Known to everyone present.
- D-events: Known to be disputable.

(Labov and Fanshel 1977: 100)

In institutional encounters, knowledge is often thought to be asymmetrical as the counsellor can be expected to be an expert on matters that the client does not know very much about, such as legislation and organizational routines (A or B events). On the other hand the client is also expected to know things that she has sole access to, for instance vocational preferences. But what has been less considered is that talking about the latter often involves knowledge about "D-events", for example, hypothetical issues and unknown settings (e.g. particular education programs, work sites) that both the client and the counsellor know little about. Thus, the client's interactional dilemma might be formulated as the need to talk (argue) about matters while lacking first-hand knowledge.

To manage this dilemma an "authoritative source" (Pomerantz 1989: 108) might be invoked as an epistemic resource, supplying access (and entitlement) to a more credible "insider" knowledge (more qualified to make assessments about future/foreign settings). The issue might thus be put as:

*How are third parties' assessments invoked in the negotiating of appropriate vocational rehabilitation measures? What are their interactional functions in terms of misaligning with the counsellor's investigating agenda?*

This way of mundane reasoning is possibly not quite appreciated from a professional point of view since standards of professional case work demand each case to be given a professional *individual* treatment<sup>2</sup>.

#### **1.4 Why study *clients'* projects?**

Of course, the professionals' verbal moves will also be part of the analysis in this dissertation, but the research issues above are nevertheless formulated as to understand the client's interactional projects, rather than the professional's. How come? In social research Mayer & Timms' (1970) book "The client speaks" represented a shift in terms of letting clients speak in their own voice, rather than relying on the professionals' accounts of them (Seltzer and Kullberg 2001). This book used interviews to examine working class clients' (dis)satisfaction with casework in London. But although a more dynamic story on clients' accounting practices impedes, within various traditions of ethnography and talk-in-interaction, this section argues that social research still has a preference for studying professional's constructing activities, unfortunately, at the expense of fully identifying and understanding what clients are doing (or trying to do). Thus, clients' interaction with the professional part are often given a somewhat reductionist (Sibeon 2004) treatment in social research, and even traditions analysing institutional talk often under-analyse the client's contribution.

##### **1.4.1 The dominated client**

Various research traditions treat the definition of social problems and decision making as the outcome of a labelling process, which gives the professional part an upper hand. The theoretical inspirations are multiple: institution theories on street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 1980; Prottas 1979), social constructionism (Emerson and Messinger 1977; Spector and Kitsuse 2001), symbolic interactionism (Becker 1973; Carstens 1998; Goffman 1968a; Goffman 1968b) and even Foucault (Järvinen and Mortensen 2002; Villadsen 2003).

Following Prottas' perspective on "people-processing" welfare organisations, clients are the organisation's "raw material" (1979: 3), *made* by the professional: "Clients are artificial entities created in street-level bureaucracies by the actions of street-level bureaucrats" (Prottas 1979: 3). In contrast, professionals are deemed as having a relative autonomy regarding how institutional goals are practically fulfilled (Lipsky 1980: 16ff), and their "implementing capacity" has been widely assumed in Norwegian research<sup>3</sup> (Brodin 1997; Fossetøl 1999b: 3; Helle 1999: 120, 125; Hvinden and Ford 1997: 19). From a constructionist perspective clients' inferior status resides in the ways clients are described by control agents such as

police, judges, juries, psychiatrists, social workers, doctors and so on, often in a moral tone (Miller and Holstein 1983). For instance, in a field work from a Danish revalidation centre Mik-Meyer found that professionals, both in staff meetings and in written discourse, talk about uncooperative clients in psychological terms, such as “illness-focused” or “deadlocked” (Mik-Meyer 2003; Mik-Meyer 2004). In another study social workers are described as mastering a broad interpretive repertoire for professional categorization (Juhila 2009), without the same analytic attention being given to clients’ practices.

Very often the client is portrayed as overwhelmed by feelings of confusion and estrangement caused by the welfare bureaucracy: “He is rarely provided with adequate information, from his point of view, about either the rationale behind the professional’s actions or the way the organization functions” (Robinson 1978: 41). In the NAV research the negative experience of encountering multiple counsellors is described in the following way: «The many faces of the agency might lead to a sense of arbitrariness and might thus in the long term lead to estrangement, despair or infringement” (Lundberg 2012: 235). The strain of being in a rehabilitation process is described as being in a “constant battle situation” (Breimo 2012: 110), and the institutional vocabulary is experienced as a “culture shock”: “I did not understand what they talked about, because they talked in a special manner”(Hansen, Lundberg, and Syltevik 2013: 101). Within this confusing system meeting the right person is crucial to the client: “It surely depends upon who you meet, what kind of help there is to get” (Helle 2001: 17; see also Jessen 1997: 17; Moshuus 2010). But in NAV supportive relationships that “offer a haven in times of stress and worry”(Howe 1993: 59) seem to be hard to get.

The overall description of clients as being “processed” (Protas 1979) or “constructed” by the professional part seems to suggest clients’ accounting capacities to be more or less missing or damaged. To this it might be argued that the client within ethnographic studies is indeed granted agency. But even so the professional’s definition of the situation tend to be presented as “hyper real” compared to the client’s definition (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2003: 18). In such interpretations the client is entrapped in a “vicious circle”, where the client’s resistance is seen as confirming that the client actually needs professional treatment (Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2003: 20). Thus, in the company of a categorizing professional, the client’s accounting capacities is bound to loose. (Strax (2003), who has Goffman’s “Asylums” as it’s theoretical anchor, is an exception to this pattern.)

Ethnomethodology would on the other hand demonstrate the client's interactional competence even in hard times. Certainly, this is not to deny that clients do have painful psychological experiences or unpleasant experiences with NAV. (Apart from troublesome follow-up meetings, clients might find participation in boring activation measures quite meaningless (Holmqvist 2010).) From an ethnomethodological approach they are nevertheless competent participants able to make sense and communicate in face-to-face encounters. (To suggest otherwise is perhaps to enact paternalism or what Holstein and Miller call "victimization" - to instruct "others to understand the actor as a rather *passive*, indeed *helpless*, recipient of injury or injustice" (Holstein and Miller 1990: 119).)

Thus, although studies within institutional ethnography and the sociology of social problems appear to be dealing with "the neglected situation", their view of interaction has been criticized by ethnomethodologists for being "analytically prefigured" (Marlaire and Maynard 1993: 186). In addition to the critique about research as theoretically loaded, the traditional ethnographic methods of interview and participant observation are not considered to provide sufficient evidence for describing social practices (a much provoking stance, see Hammersley (2003).) This is not only because there often somehow is a difference between what people say and do, the general limitation of the human memory, or because accounts might be based on misunderstandings or partial knowledge. More importantly, data is never simply collected, but is gradually co-constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee, producing turns and sequences of talk as they go along. As put by Silverman, the research interview "*generates* categories instead of looking at how categories are ordinarily deployed" (Silverman 1998: 60).

#### **1.4.2 A more dynamic story emerging**

The last decades there have been an increasing interest for research focusing on "authentic conversation" (audio and/or video recorded) where the goal is to "capture in the greatest detail possible the structures and dynamics of these encounters"(Seltzer and Kullberg 2001: xxvii). However, even within this research the analytic "catch" is very often to analyse the professionals' moves in depth, for example professionals' ways of making inquiries and giving advice (see references in article I). Paul Drew marked out as a paradox that, while blaming the medical practice the CA research on medical encounters "has itself largely ignored the role of patients in their interactions with doctors" (...) [and]

any account of the perspective of patients tends to have been incidental to showing that, and how, doctors control the agenda of the interview in ways which suppress those perspectives" (2001:262).

This criticism might have some relevance to studies of welfare settings as well, which often focus on what Zimmerman, in his pioneering research from a public assistance agency, called “the investigative stance” (Zimmerman 1969: 129). The concern to describe how the professional part performs institutional tasks has been evident within various research on counselling and social security encounters (Cedersund 1992; Fredin 1993; Hall, Sarangi, and Slembrouck 2005; Hydén 1996; Oltedal 2000; Ranger 1986; Roberts and Sarangi 1999b; Rostila 1997), within social constructionism sometimes expressed as “persuasive discourse” (Miller 1991; Suoninen and Jokinen 2005; Taylor and White 2000).

Certainly, this interest for the professionals’ activities has been justified indeed, not least since the professional part dominates in terms of initiating actions (such as questions) that the co-participant must relate to: “the dominant party is the one who manages to direct and control the other party’s action to the greatest extent and who also avoids being directed and controlled in his own interactive behaviour” (Linell, Gustavsson, and Juvonen 1988: 416). Linell’s “initiative-response analysis”, counting and comparing initiating and responding aspects of each parties’ turns, has been adopted in studies of social work encounters (Cedersund and Säljö 1993; Fredin 1993), which, together with studies using other ways of counting (Berg Sørensen 1995; Olesen 2001), have documented the professional’s interactional dominance. And, since it is assumed that the interactional dominant actor “will stand a good chance of enforcing his or her own perspective or rationality on the joint discourse” (Linell 1990: 164), professionals, adopting “the bureaucratic voice”(Cedersund and Säljö 1993), are suggested to be dominant in a semantic sense as well (Fredin 1993).

Working in a more “neutral” conversation analytic tradition, Vehviläinen’s study on Finnish career guidance encounters provides a solid empirical account of how counsellors package their agenda-moving inquiries to construct the agenda as the student’s agenda (Vehviläinen 1999). The analytic focus is on the professional’s moves (which leaves the impression that the question is all that matters, forget about the answer). In section 5 of her thesis Vehviläinen does treat clients’ initiation of “troubles-talk” as an alternative entrance. But unfortunately, “due to space limitations” (Vehviläinen 1999: 129) the analytic focus is on the professional’s response to the troubles-talk, not the reporting of the trouble itself. Indeed, much CA counselling research do not treat clients’ responses on their own terms insofar as their analyses often tend to demonstrate how the professional uses the client’s answer to ground advice in the client’s perspective in a procedure of “stepwise entry” (Heritage and Sefi 1992; Maynard 1992; Silverman 1997; Vehviläinen 1999).

### 1.4.3 Research on client resistance

Over the two last decades a growing body of research has documented how clients across settings resist the professional's actions. Since the client's resistance often is implied or indirectly processed (rather than made explicit), this research suggest that the professional and the client collaborate to minimize disagreement. For instance, within Heritage and Sefi's study of the interaction between first-time mothers and health visitors it was found that advice not pursued by the mothers themselves were likely to be passively resisted in terms of "unmarked acknowledgement", or minimal response tokens (Heritage and Sefi 1992). Similar non-confrontational ways of dissenting with professionals' advice have been described in aids-counselling meetings (Silverman 1997) and in rehabilitation settings (Barnard, Cruice, and Playford 2010).

But also more overt forms of client resistance have been described, not least Tania Stiver's research on medical encounters (Stivers 2006; Stivers 2007). Here, a distinction between passive and active resistance is outlined in the following way:

Whereas passive resistance works purely in a second/responsive sequential position, active resistance makes relevant a next action by the physician, so it is both a responsive and an initiating action" (Stivers 2006: 288).

Now this definition of active client resistance matches the "fishing" orientation of problem-tellings and it's like (where the professional might offer a service to help out), but it does not catch the more blocking steps, invoked to manage the professional's investigating agenda (see 6.2.1). CA research from counselling settings have started to explore this dimension; how clients may resist optimistic questions in therapy (MacMartin 2008) or the therapist's analytic assertions/noticing about the client's conduct (Vehviläinen 2008). The amount of research dealing with question/investigation resistance in institutional settings is still quite small, and often the analytic focus is centred on how the professional part deals with client resistance (Emmison, Butler, and Danby 2011; Hepburn and Potter 2011; Hutchby 2002; Muntigl 2013; Vehviläinen 2008), rather than examining the resistance in its own right. Hence, more client-centred research, from multiple settings, is needed to identify and understand the full range of active/overt client resistance which is at work in various types of welfare encounters.

Not to forget, also other approaches have contributed to our knowledge about the dynamics of welfare encounters, for instance, research assuming that welfare clients participate in more abstract processes of cultural (Juhila 2004) and institutional (Mäkitalo 2003) categorisation. Within this broad range of research, inspired by dialogism, social constructionism and

ethnomethodology, it has for instance been showed how a client can resist treatment suggestions (Juhila 2003) and constructions of the client's employability (Eskelinen, Olesen, and Caswell 2010). However, compared to CA, these studies often employ less rigorous research methods, and to strengthen the claim that "deficient clients are relics of the past" (Seltzer and Kullberg 2001: 23) more detailed analysis of clients' accounting practices is needed.

## **1.5 The organization of the thesis**

In Section 2 a thin description of "the bigger picture" of vocational rehabilitation is provided. Rather than providing an up to date introduction to NAV's follow-up services the section should be read as introducing important aspects of the macro context for the data being analysed, that is, encounters that were taped in 2008/2009. In Section 3 the analytic perspective of ethnomethodological conversation analysis will be presented in more detail. This will not be a complete, overall presentation, as only issues important for understanding the articles in the dissertation will be treated. Various methodological issues will be treated separately in Section 4, and in Section 5 summaries of the studies are provided. In Section 6 the findings of the studies will be elaborated around clients' two (often parallel) interactional projects of defending cases and defending moral accountability through coordinated descriptive practices. In Section 7 conclusions are drawn as well as addressing relevancies for the field.



## 2. What is vocational rehabilitation?

### 2.1 Organizing the work line

The public concern to rehabilitate disabled persons accelerated after the Second World War when market services gradually were developed for men with tuberculosis and war injuries (Midré 2001). Since the double Law on disability pension and Law on rehabilitation in 1960, the so called “work line” has been the basic value in Norwegian welfare policy. As perhaps goes without saying, “the work line” suggests that disabled should work instead of passively receiving benefits, but from the 60s the number of clients with muscle/skeleton or psychiatric problems grew rapidly, and this also led to a strong growth in receivers of disability benefit (Midré 2001). Until the beginning of the 90s, the number of sheltered workshops increased, but results in terms of employment were poor.

To counter this development, The Rehabilitation White paper [Attføringsmeldinga] (1991-92) heavily reintroduced “the work line” in political discourse:

The social security system must be shaped so that the work line becomes a first choice for all parties involved and contribute to avoid unnecessary exclusion and shut out of vulnerable groups from working life (St.meld.nr.39 1991-92: 14).

In addition to economic concerns, both the Rehabilitation White paper and the following The Welfare paper [St.melding nr. 35, 1994-95] emphasized work as the route to improve living conditions and quality of life. Vocational rehabilitation was thus supposed to be a help to helping oneself.

The Rehabilitation White paper (1991-92) prescribed organizational rearrangements suggesting a stronger specialization of institutional roles. The National Insurance Office had the authority on the medical terms for being granted vocational rehabilitation, but from 1994 the Norwegian Employment Service [Aetat], with a more end-means orientation (Hvinden and Ford 1997), got the sole responsibility for integrating the services of vocational rehabilitation into the ordinary system of employment services. However, the numerous health related benefits created delays so that clients first received passive benefits (sickness benefit and rehabilitation money) for a very long time, and even after transition to Aetat there was often a considerable waiting period before the start-up of employment measures. This inefficiency together with the problem of clients (temporarily) losing their income in the grey area between offices (Ford 2000), paved the way for the recent NAV-reform (2006-2011).

To integrate a system which, according to a book title, was deemed as “Divided against itself” (Hvinden 1994), the services of the employment service, the national insurance office and the social security office fused into a unified organization (NAV), with a unique mandatory partnership between state and local authorities (Fimreite and Hagen 2009). To make this new “one-stop” office efficient and flexible, the benefit system was simplified in 2010 so that the health related benefits of rehabilitation money, vocational rehabilitation money and the temporary disability were replaced by the so called “employment clarification benefit”. The NAV-reform also standardized their follow-up services by adopting a profiling tool for assessing the client’s work capability (Duell, Singh, and Tergeist 2009). But, as this tool was not yet implemented in 2008/2009 when the data of this thesis was collected, we will not get into details on this. Although the objective of the NAV-reform was to give clients more available (“one door”) and more individually adapted services, the work line was clearly expressed in the reform’s objective: “more people in work and activity – fewer on benefit” (St.meld.nr.9 2006-2007) - somewhat modified perhaps since the term “activity” displays an acknowledgement that not everybody is able to work in the regular labour market.

## **2.2 The policy of vocational rehabilitation**

As mentioned, the benefit system was revised in 2010, but when this data was collected in 2008/2009, “vocational rehabilitation” was still the active labour market programme designed for helping people with reduced health and work capacity (back) into employment. And at the time of recording, most clients received what then was called “vocational rehabilitation money”<sup>4</sup> which, rather than being a discretionary benefit, is a right-based benefit measured out of prior income according to a qualified insurance principle. (The current benefit is measured in pretty much the same way). Following Folketrygdloven<sup>5</sup> §11-6, current at that moment, clients of vocational rehabilitation might be granted employment measures “necessary” and “appropriate” to gain or keep a “suitable work”. This meant that if it was not possible for the client to get a job with the given qualifications, an action plan should be worked out. If employment measures (for example job training or education) were granted, the client might be entitled to supplementary benefits to cover extra expenses in connection with the employment measure (such as travels and school books). In return, clients of vocational rehabilitation were entitled as well as obliged to take part in NAV’s follow-up services.

As will be elaborated in the next section, the NAV-client is expected to take a much active part in making the plan. According to information on NAV’s web site at this time, the client

was supposed to suggest a suitable work and next find out what was needed to get there (NAV 2009b). (In practice, employment measures might in some cases be initiated first, as a preparatory step to find a plan.) Also, the client should provide an alternative plan in case the first option could not be approved. In this process NAV would offer information, counselling, mapping of interests and occupational psychology assistance (NAV 2009b). In practice, general information might be given in groups, before an individual appointment with a NAV counsellor was set up. But despite of this “client centeredness”, NAV also had a gatekeeping function in terms of approving the client’s plan, that is, decide whether the plan would be approved as “appropriate” and “necessary” (Folketrygdloven §10-6 current at this time). This duality of controlling and supporting clients has been expressed as the help’s “janus-face”(Järvinen 2002), or as a dilemma between the client’s autonomy and the professional’s control (Hjörne, Juhila, and Nijnatten 2010: 304).

### **2.3 The ideology of the active client**

From the perspective of Foucault inspired research, client-centred activation policies like vocational rehabilitation have been seen as carrying along an ethos of individual autonomy, what OECD called “an active society” (Dean 1995). This ethos seeks “to dismantle the contract between state and citizen that was inscribed in the social democratic welfare state and to build a more ‘modern’ contract based on responsibility and choice (Newman 2005: 1). Along this line of thinking, clients are “responsibilized” (Clarke 2005) to carry out a self-directed transformation of working life identities, rather than such changes being imposed from the outside. As expressed by Villadsen: “Instead of needs defined by better judging experts user wishes are emphasized as a more direct and “true” way to secure individual happiness and welfare” (Villadsen 2003:218). Thus, by identifying one’s problems and formulating one’s priorities, the professional teaches the client “to relate “development-orientated” to oneself”(Villadsen 2003: 223).

The ideal is often put in terms of clients having a sense of “ownership” (Hernes, Heum, Haavorsen, and Saglie 2010: 223) to their plans. So how has the ideology of “the active client” been developed within the setting of vocational rehabilitation? At least since the 90s it has been worked systematically to establish a working theory of the client as “active”. The language of NPM or New Public Management (Johnsson and Hvinden 2005) was embedded in Aetat’s services, for instance in the practice of addressing clients as “customers” in written correspondence even though the client obviously couldn’t choose alternative service providers (Jessen 1997). The theoretical basis for this new dynamic view of the client is perhaps to be

found in a policy document from 1996 with the subtitle “Towards professional expertise in the work for vocational rehabilitation”.

This document launched a new way of understanding the client role, which was called “the actor model” (Tøssebro 1999). The actor model was introduced as a replacement of the traditional Parsonian sick role, where the professional, pretty much like a doctor, was the active part in establishing working life diagnosis, (this description of the earlier practices has been characterized as polemic (Fossestøl 1999a)). Theoretically the actor model was grounded in existential philosophy and constructionism and especially Nygård’s (1993) account of motivation psychology:

Being able to see oneself as the cause of changes in the environment is a major incentive to action. Whereas the actor, through his or her active relationship to the environment, plays a constructive role in his or her development, the pawn’s passivity will make him or her to a greater extent a mere product of the environment. Such a self-understanding as actor also implies experience of responsibility for one’s own actions (Tøssebro 1999: 22).

The actor model suggested the client to think of herself as a responsible actor rather than a pawn that is passively moved around on the board. Building on a “faith can move mountains”-thinking, the mantra of activation is to focus on *solutions* rather than problems (Carstens 2002: 37). As expressed in the guidelines of vocational rehabilitation, in the end of section 6.1: “A strong motivation can undoubtedly make up for poor health conditions”<sup>6</sup>(NAV 2009a).

The actor model prescribed a clear division of labour where the client was responsible for finding a solution, whereas the counsellor’s role was, prior to this, to provide information and counselling and in the end approve the client’s plan. This suggested the following course of events: 1) Counsellor: Information and counselling about the client’s rights and duties (often in groups), 2) Client: Find and choose an employment measure, 3) Counsellor: Make a decision. However, evaluations very soon suggested that the actor-model was most successful among resourceful clients, who already felt motivated (Jessen 1997; Olsen, Jensen, and Vangstad 2003). In an early pilot project many clients were much concerned with health and economic problems and thus deemed to be a long way off the ideal of the actor-model (Spjelkavik and Enehaug 1999). (Also see article II in this dissertation dealing with clients’ responses to solution-eliciting questions, which might be seen as documenting that “the actor model”, assuming rather than nurturing motivation, is still around in follow-up encounters).

One might say that the NAV-reform, which perhaps follows a “whole-of-government” approach (see Christensen and Læg Reid 2007 on this notion) rather than pure NPM, attempted to do away with Aetat’s bad image as “demanding too much” from their clients. Compared to the earlier “actor model” where the client should “construct a new, vocational, existence for himself” (Tøssebro 1999: 25) the present duty of “active contribution” seems to suggest a process of co-participation: “It is a condition for entitlement to benefits under this chapter that the member contributes actively in the process of getting work. The requirements to self-activity should be tailored to the individual's functioning and determined at the granting of the benefit” (Current version of Folketrygdloven §11-8). Seen in relation to the special history of vocational rehabilitation, the second line perhaps implies more a softening than an actual sharpening of activity demands (but not for clients who earlier received the more passive benefits rehabilitation money and temporary disability benefit).

Earlier evaluations have suggested participation in vocational rehabilitation to be an ambiguous experience (Johnsson and Hvinden 2005; Møller, Flermoen, and Løyland 2003). But in contrast to the methodology of this project, research based on interview data (that is, most research) do not demonstrate the very activities and details that constitute the difficulty in situ, neither how events are practically managed, or solved. Hence so far, research from this setting, have only in small degree shown *how* ambiguity comes about in everyday practice. Thus, we need research that allows us to learn about this as a member’s concern to be dealt with jointly and in real time interaction.

### 3. A conversation analytic approach to accounting practices

#### 3.1 An “everyday use” perspective

Clients’ accounting practices will in this thesis mainly be analysed by utilizing the tools of ethnomethodological conversation analysis (CA), and this section briefly outlines the theoretical core of this research perspective. Within CA, interaction is in Schegloff’s terms seen as the “primordial scene of social life” and the approach insists to use video and/or audio data collected from “*naturally occurring* occasions” (Atkinson and Heritage 1984: 5). The analytic focus upon the organization of talk, in mundane as well as institutional settings, is due to the fact that “an overwhelming proportion of the world’s business is conducted through the medium of spoken interaction” (Heritage 1984b: 239). According to Heritage the everyday management of descriptions has been a much neglected subject in sociological research because of “... a pervasive and long-standing view which treats language exclusively in terms of its representative function”, which suggests that the meaning of a word is what it “corresponds with” or “stands for” in the real world” (Heritage 1984b: 137).

In contrast, ethnomethodology and CA is more in line with Wittgenstein’s view of meaning, not as fixed, but as being established in mundane interaction. The aim of conversation analysis is “to discover and explicate the practices through which interactants produce and understand conduct in conversation”(Drew 2005: 75). That is, participants use shared communicative practices as a resource both for making one’s own behaviour intelligible for others and to make sense of what co-participants are doing. To be accountable means to design and coordinate accounts to be recognizable for others as doing this or that (answering a question, making a proposal, turning down a proposal etc.), in short, performing recognizable social activities. For competent members or “cultural colleagues” (1967: 11) these situated practices are in Garfinkel’s terms “observable-and-reportable”(1967: 1) as business as usual. And the shared normative basis that interaction and indexical meanings ultimately relies on, is normally not made visible unless it is missing or disturbed in some sense, as efficiently demonstrated in Garfinkel’s breaching experiments. Thus, mostly participants can “go on” and furnish “whatever unstated understanding” (Garfinkel 1967: 3).

This ability is not merely a cognitive state of mind, as they are grounded in the situated activities in question (what Wittgenstein (2009) called “a form of life”<sup>7</sup>). According to Levinson institutional encounters should be understood as particular “activity-types”, where interaction is goal-defined and constrained regarding what can pass as “allowable

contributions” in speech (Levinson 1992). Both in everyday and institutional talk accounts are inference-rich and indexical, and they rely on the context to be understood (Cromdal, Osvaldsson, and Persson-Thunqvist 2008: 930). This implies the existence of a mutual knowledge (Levinson 1992), more or less shared by native speakers (Gumperz 1995). For instance, the clients in this study had no problems with making the “special inferences” embedded in the professional’s eliciting question “What are you going to do? [in your period of vocational rehabilitation]”. This “quasi-open” question was never “misunderstood”, so that the clients said that she intended to read more books or spend more time with the kids (which, even if true, would be poorly aligned to appropriate clienthood).

According to Mills (1940), borrowing from Burke, there are institutional “vocabularies of motives” specific for the setting, which he defined as “...accepted justifications for present, future, or past programs or acts” (Mills 1940:907). People influence each other by appealing to “a vocabulary of motives associated with a norm which both members of the situation are in agreement” (Mills 1940:907f), and which is appropriate for the setting in question:

Institutionally different situations have different vocabularies of motive appropriate to their respective behaviours. (...) that type situations and function as cues and justifications for normative actions in it (Mills 1940:906)

If a client’s actions are to be recognized, or pass, as accountable they must be attuned not only to the co-participants, but to the particular institutional framework of vocational rehabilitation as well. In other words, to produce actions aligning in both an interactional and a cultural sense (Stokes and Hewitt 1976), participants need both interactional knowhow and a certain distribution of knowledge. Regarding the latter, the special framework of vocational rehabilitation makes certain topics relevant and “allowable” such as the client’s wishes and needs, health issues, educational and vocational background, personal abilities and opportunities at the labour market (NAV 2009a: see section 6.1.2.1 in NAV’s official guidelines about the judgement of “suitable vocation”).

Thus, clients’ competence will in this dissertation be interpreted, not only as an ability to take part in conversations in general, but as being able to take part in a particular kind of conversation, produced within the particular accountability framework of vocational rehabilitation. The application of conversation analysis in this dissertation is then not to analyse activities per se in contrast to the ethnographic ambition to understand settings (see Maynard (2006)). Activities realize the multi-facets of social roles, and the method of conversation analysis “may supply details of cultural context rarely provided in ethnography”

(Mandelbaum 1990: 333). Thus, by explicating what might be expected from this kind of clients and how these expectations are managed these studies will provide bits of grounded knowledge of the specific culture in action as well.

### 3.2 Talk in action

Ethnomethodology and CA pursue the action dimension of talk in a very empirical fashion. Within the conversation analytic approach descriptions are not studied for what they refer to, but for how they are reflexively *used* “to make available, maintain, transform or otherwise manage concerted organized social activities” (Heritage 1984b: 141).

To accomplish this speakers are said to “recipient design” their talk to the particular recipient. This suggests “a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the coparticipants” (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974:43). In seeking services, clients are not presenting information as such, but rather in a “recipient-designed manner” (Arminen 2005: 88), for example as “doctorable” (Heritage and Robinson 2006) or “policeable” (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990) matter. Similarly, within the context of welfare encounters, the apparently passive act of presenting problems to a professional to “solve the problem” (Jefferson and Lee 1992) should not be seen as an accidental event, but as a “recipient designed” activity.

Moreover, within the CA tradition, the participants’ design of turns and actions is analysed in terms of sequential position, since speakers tend to fit their talk to what the other speaker just said (Drew 2005: 86). In the sixties Sacks worked as a Fellow at the Centre for the Scientific Study of Suicide in Los Angeles, and in his examination of calls to a suicide helpline he observed that the second speaker (the caller) tended to adopt the format of the first speaker (saying hello, names)(Silverman 1998: 98). This led to the discovery of spoken discourse as being organized in rule-like adjacency-pairs (a “greeting” projects the return of a “greeting”, and a “question” projects an “answer” as the relevant next action). In response to a first pair action “a speaker can show that he understood what a prior aimed at, and that he is willing to go along with that”(Schegloff and Sacks 1973).

The concept of “preference organization” in CA suggests that there exist alternative, institutionalized ways of speaking, which have unequal cultural value:



Sequences are the vehicle for getting some activity accomplished, and that response to the first pair part which embodies or favors furthering or the accomplishment of the activity is the favoured – or, as we shall term it, the preferred – second pair part (Schegloff 2007: 59)

The vocabulary of preference is here not suggested to represent mental states of minds, but rather the conventional composition and position of first and second actions (also see Levinson 1983). If a person is invited for dinner, an acceptance is the “preferred” response and a rejection is the “dispreferred” response, no matter what the parties really would like to.

A local pressure for alignment is constituted in first pair parts, which addressed speakers need to orient to. The relevance rule in adjacency turns thus represents ways for speakers to exert “some local influence over the conduct of their co-interactants”(Heritage 1984b: 265). In many institutional settings professionals tend to ask far more questions than clients, which make them powerful in terms of affecting how the interaction develops. For example in article I and II it is demonstrated how counsellors ask solution-eliciting questions and in article III and IV there are investigative ones. It should nevertheless be noted that the power to ask questions is here not treated as something that exclusively belongs to the role of professionals. When the opposite occur (albeit not as often), and the client asks a question, the normative “pressure” to align with the local relevancies of the first action is still there as an inherent property of talk, rather than role entitlements as such.

This might be illustrated by an extract from one of the vocational rehabilitation encounters. It demonstrates that although it usually is the counsellor who elicits the client about plans (article I and II), this does not have to be the case:

(ID 6, co=counsellor, cl=female client)

2	co:	Our talk today will then be about- about:t the activity plan or action	: [plan.
3	cl:		[Okay, do you have
		any plans for me?	
4		(0.9)	
5	co:	e:::h, yes I have a way of approaching it.	

It is interesting to notice how fast the client takes the floor in line 3. The counsellor’s reformulation of “activity plan” into “action plan” gives the client plenty of time to anticipate that the counsellor is about to finish. The overlapping talk (line 2/3) suggests that the client comes in a bit too early (violating the ground-rule of turn-taking, one speaker at time (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974)). And as the only instance in this data, the client utilizes her turn to pose an eliciting question (whether the counsellor has plans for her). The gap in line 4 and the word-search in line 5 might indicate that this was a rather unexpected action to the

counsellor (even though he did have something in mind for her and soon set off to inform about a particular employment measure).

### **3.3 Managing alignment problems**

Although Sacks sometimes used mechanical metaphors like the “machinery” (Silverman 1998: 64f), the relevance rule in adjacency turns does not suggest that talk is some kind of automatic call-response system, where a first action simply induces a second response. Sacks understood interaction as “rule-guided” rather than “rule-governed” (Silverman 1998: 35), and it is therefore possible for speakers to resist or misalign with a projected action when producing a response. In this study the most common adjacency pairs will be “questions” making relevant “answers” as well as “proposals” making relevant “acceptance/rejection”. Resistance might of course be enacted as outright refusals to answer (Ekström 2009) or as “rejections”(Davidson 1984), but in this dissertation also less overt misalignment practices will count as doing resistance. Although no counting has been made, the overall impression is that the clients in this material quite often did not cooperate to realize an invited action (often a question-answer sequence). However, the misalignment problems treated in the studies are of somewhat different kinds.

A less serious form of resistance arises when a preferred action is produced as expected, but in a different design than what was projected through the first action. This is so because the first action not only projects a certain action (a greeting, an answer), but its grammatical design might also project how the next action should look like (Raymond 2003; Stivers and Hayashi 2010). For instance, Wh-interrogatives specify certain types of answers (what, who, when). An answer conforming to the terms of the first action is called “type conforming”, those which do not, are called “non-conforming” (Raymond 2003). In article I in this dissertation both a type conforming and a non-conforming way of answering the counsellor’s eliciting question are analysed (in the first extract the client formulates an option, in the second an option is alluded to in a more narrative fashion). The occurrence of non-conforming actions are interesting to study as this choice of design display that the recipient orient to the first action (or its terms) as problematic in some way or another (Raymond 2003).

A perhaps more serious form of resistance occurs when the responding action is not complying with the “agenda” (Stivers and Hayashi 2010) of the first action. Clients who have prepared a plan might have pragmatic reasons to resist the counsellor’s investigative action. In

this material there are at least three kinds of “critical occasions” where a client needs to actively resist and somehow misalign with an action introduced by the counsellor:

- a) Counsellor’s investigative questions – “why this plan for you?” – which follow the client’s proposal and which might index health, abilities, labour market, etc. Especially challenging are,
- b) Counter-proposals voiced by the counsellor (thus, accounting for why this alternative plan is *not* a good option, is needed).  
And to a lesser degree also,
- c) Counter-proposals voiced by the client (usually requested by the counsellor).

When the title of the dissertation suggests that the client is “defending” his case while managing the counsellor’s inquiries, this might perhaps sound a bit exaggerated, since, at the moment of speaking, it is far from clear that the parties indeed have different interests (as in courtroom cross-examination (Drew 1992)). But discussing alternative options might have “damaging implications” (Drew 1992) and represent a potential threat to the client’s plan if the competing option is established as the most appropriate. Thus, at least for the sake of “possible disagreement”(Nofsinger 1991: 147) the counsellor’s agenda of identifying and considering alternatives needs to be carefully managed.

Moreover, in research on media interviews of public figures, Heritage and Clayman (2010) distinguish between a negative and a positive dimension of resistance:

The *negative* dimension is manifest in the degree to which the interviewee’s response falls short of an adequate answer to the question (...) The *positive* dimension is manifest in the degree to which the response moves beyond the parameters of the question, producing actions or addressing topics that were not specifically called for (Heritage and Clayman 2010: 47) .

In this dissertation the negative kind is perhaps most prominent in article I and II where the client displays problems with producing a preferred response to the counsellor’s solution-eliciting questions. The positive kind will dominate in article III (reporting abandoned proposals) and in article IV (reporting second-hand assessments), and, as the studies show, the shift of activity or focus in the response turn may be performed in a more or less overt manner. Sometimes an alternative option is openly rejected, and then accounted for. Other times the account alone will realize the “rejection” in a more implicit manner. In either case clients can trade on what Drew referred to as “the maximal quality of descriptions” (Drew 1992: 487, 495ff), where descriptions characterize described items as a whole while arguing and displaying a certain stance to the option in question (“sedentary work”). Of course, on an

overall argumentative level, turning down competing options also mean backing the client's own proposal as this in the end will be positioned as the best option.

Consequently, in this material there is often no clear line between clients' "arguing" versus "accounting" discourse. Since counsellors' actions project alignment rather than misalignment, these arguments also work as (moral) reasons for resisting the counsellor's investigation. Within a conversation analytic approach, the social (or moral) identity of being a client of vocational rehabilitation ultimately "rest on the underlying alignment of discourse identities" (Zimmerman 1998: 90). That is, to be accountable as a (good) client, it is necessary to fulfil conventional discursive obligations, like answering questions and giving a proper account for not producing a preferred answer. Thus, clients' accountings will in this dissertation be seen as negotiating, not only cases in a pragmatic fashion, but also the maintenance of a desirable social identity.

### **3.4 Accountings: Saving whose faces?**

In this dissertation Scott and Lyman's paper *Accounts* (1968) as well as Goffman's ideas on face-work (Goffman 1967b) have been a supplementary theoretical inspiration to understand clients' accounting practices. This is most noticeable in article II and III where clients invoke accounting elements in response to the counsellor's moves, which is, at least partly, interpreted as moves defending the speaker's moral self.

Ever since Scott and Lyman's seminal paper, accounts have been understood as discursive devices for managing "unanticipated or untoward behaviour" (Scott and Lyman 1968: 46) or "bridging the gap between action and expectations" (Scott and Lyman 1968: 46). The actor being accused of doing something bad, might deny the pejorative qualities of his actions ("justifications"), or, he might deny full responsibility to them ("excuses"). In either case, it is the underlying negotiation of identities which is at stake:

"In competitive or bargaining situations the interactants will each seek to maximize or minimize losses, and part of the strategy involved will be to assume and accept advantageous identities, refusing those roles that are disadvantageous to the situation. *Every account is a manifestation of the underlying negotiation of identities*" (Scott and Lyman 1968: 59).

A concern about identity is also present in Goffman's face-work theory. Within Goffman's theoretical framework the social self is understood as "a sacred thing" that heavily structures social interaction. Face is defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself..." (Goffman 1967b: 5), and the rule of self-respect commits the actor to have a "defensive orientation toward saving his own face" (Goffman 1967b: 14). Now "the rule of

considerateness” suggests a protective orientation towards saving other participants’ faces as well, but this is perhaps often less profound as the feelings for others “...may differ in quantity and direction from those he has for his own face..” (Goffman 1967b: 6). In any case, face-work can be initiated to save face (moral self), either through “avoidance” practices escaping upcoming incidents or through “corrective activities” after face has been threatened. Offering an account can be one kind of correcting strategy: “Information may be provided to show that the creator was under the influence of something, or that he was under the command of somebody else and not acting for himself” (Goffman 1967b: 20). Thus, the practice of giving an account is also in Goffman’s universe connected to defending and preserving (fragile) identities.

According to this the professional’s eliciting actions treated in article II, might be seen as occasioning a gap between the expectations set up by the question and the client’s not very substantial answer, a gap which calls for an account (Scott & Lyman 1968). Or, put in Goffman’s terms one could say that clients without plans to report can find themselves to be “out of face”: “without having ready a line of the kind participants in such situations are expected to take” (Goffman 1967a:8). But, as will be commented below, the conversation analytic approach has not paid very much attention to the account giver’s concern for displaying moral adequacy on his own part.

The relationship between Goffman’s face-work theory and the overall CA framework of this thesis is, albeit not missing altogether, a difficult one. Much of the critique of Goffman has been a much reasonable criticism about him being too much a psychologist, not really describing what happens in the interaction order (Schegloff 1988). Others, like Rawls (1989b), has suggested that Goffman pretty much shares the view of EM/CA on identities as socially constituted (expressed in the line that a person’s social face is “only on loan to him from society” (Goffman 1967b: 10)). Thus, Goffman’s problem is perhaps not primarily at the level of theory, but has more to do with current research traditions having better methods for demonstrating how face-work is done (Rawls 1989b; Samra-Fredericks 2010) in talk. Nevertheless, there are differences with implications for the study of peoples’ accounting practices, which cannot be denied.

While interpretative studies often tend to describe accounts as a suspension of social interaction, where actors adopt a “theoretical stance” and analyse their doings retrospectively (Semin and Manstead 1983:38), ethnomethodological approaches describe accountability as

embedded in talk-in-interaction or “concerted actions” (Garfinkel 1967). As this citation from Lerner suggests, this means re-locating issues of self-other from a psychological to a social realm of talk:

By situating self and other as consequential constituent features of the organization of particular types of action sequences, one thereby establishes a site for face, face-threat, and face-work grounded in the particulars of talk (and other conduct) in interaction (Lerner 1996: 319).

Not least can this empirical site of sequential talk demonstrate how social life generates face troubles or “incidents”. Surely, Goffman talked about being “out of touch with the situation”(Goffman 1967b: 8), but very often he seemed to imagine an actor managing “disconfirming information” (Goffman 1967b: 6) on his own. This puts focus on inner processes and gives the actor, “standing guard over the flow of events” (Goffman 1967b: 9), an unrealistic control. In contrast, CA brings the actor right into the flow, interacting with other members, rather than standing safe on the riverbank. Thus, accountability is within EM/CA a matter dealt with and solved in unfolding conversations, rather than subjects talking to themselves – in “timeouts” that simply do not exist (Maynard 1991; Wilson 1991).

While Goffman and Scott/Lyman tend to treat accounts as a device for preserving or restoring the speaker’s moral identity after “wrongdoings”, CA sees accounts as a resource for preserving social relationships in the enactment of dispreferred actions, such as turning down an invitation<sup>8</sup>. (As mentioned, speakers design their speech in terms of “preference organization” where second pair parts might be designed as to maximize alignment with the action in a first pair part (preferred response), or, alternatively they misalign with the expectations that are set up (dispreferred response).) Accounts, often posing an “inability” to do something, conventionally function to preserve social solidarity by mitigating the effect of dispreferred actions according to Heritage (1984b). On this point he actually adopts the vocabulary of face, outlining account-giving as a means to maintain the face of co-interactants. Commenting a collection of no-fault accounts, Heritage writes:

They could have asserted an unwillingness to carry out the proposed action, or denied either the right of the first speaker to propose it or their own obligation to respond. It is significant, however, that the latter accounts would all, in one way or another, have threatened the ‘face’ of their co-interactants (...) All of the responses avoid any threat to the other speaker, and they also avoid any threat to the social relationship between the parties (Heritage 1988: 136).

Heritage explains speakers’ use of no-fault accounts as a device to save the relation (by not threatening the co-participants face). For instance, when some requested information cannot be provided, it is assumed that an account will display cooperation and assure the co-

participant that the question was appropriate indeed (Clayman 2002: 242). The act of saying “I do not know” has been described as “highly sensitive”(Keevallik 2011: 184) since this response can imply that the question was inappropriate and thus face-threatening to the questioner (Clayman 2002: 242; Keevallik 2011: 189).

But what about the speaker’s own face? Given that a question establishes a moral expectation for the recipient to be informed, the account for not knowing might also be seen as having self-defensive qualities, excusing or justifying the speaker’s inability to answer. Thus, while the CA tradition acknowledges the “protective” orientation described by Goffman, the “defensive” orientation is not included into the logic of face-work and account-giving.

Now, critics of politeness research have suggested that the understanding of preference in pragmatics (Levinson 1983) and conversation analysis (Pomerantz 1984a) is formal and should be complemented with a more pragmatic, psycho-social preference (Bousfield 2007: 9) doing “self-facework” rather than politeness (Hernandez-Flores 2008). But instead of treating the concern for other peoples’ face and the concern for the speaker’s own face as competing principles for organizing interaction, the findings of this dissertation can be taken to argue that both aspects are being simultaneously balanced within the participants’ accounting practices. But CA’s theoretical readiness to focus on intersubjectivity and social solidarity might have made it difficult to even notice the more self-oriented<sup>9</sup> dimensions of accounting practices.

## 4. Data and method

### 4.1 Recruitment challenges

In conversation analytic studies “the naturalist’s strategy of building up large collections of data from as many natural sites as possible”(Heritage 1988: 131) is often recommended. As a beginner, my project design was guided by this “strategy of maximum variation” (Have 2007: 70) which would suggest to recruit several NAV-offices in the data-collection process. Thus, the research was designed to investigate the interaction in vocational rehabilitation encounters more generally, not to be “biased” by local sub-cultures or the personal style of a few counsellors. The process of collecting data involved 8 different NAV-offices, which mostly were located in large or medium sized cities/towns in the eastern part of southern Norway as well as in the north. This resulted in 8 hours of recording from 15 encounters, which mainly provided the data material for this study. In addition, copies of individual rehabilitation plans and a questionnaire on background information on the participants were collected in most cases, but this written material was not used in the analyses.

The research was designed so that the counsellor recorded their own follow-up encounters by using a small dictaphone. This strategy had been adopted by others (Vehviläinen 1999) and I assumed this would be of little inconvenience to the counsellors who, because of the on-going NAV-reform were likely to be under strain. Counsellors were free to choose how to make arrangements with clients, but most of them asked the client to participate when the client attended a scheduled follow-up meeting. Since this self-service procedure implied that the counsellor was in a position to select which clients to ask, a formula encouraging the counsellors to ask all clients was made, but, of ethical reasons, excluding clients who had a serious illness. Information on funding and voluntary participation was stressed both here and in an information form that was given to the client. The participants signed a written consent-form, allowing the meeting to be recorded and that a copy of the action plan would be sent the researcher (see appendix 1). At the end of the encounter, the client was given a questionnaire in a sealed envelope on background information and how they experienced the meeting, which clients could send to the researcher directly in a stamped envelope. Not all of them were returned, and the information from this scheme was not really useful.

The idea was that this “do-it-yourself-design” would be convenient to NAV counsellors, which was important since the NAV-offices at that moment had trouble with fulfilling their services while implementing an extensive reform. But, as the volume of data suggests, the



recruiting process didn't go as smooth as planned and I didn't anticipate so much resistance against being taped, actually on both sides. Many NAV-leaders denied access as they wanted to protect their employees from further stress, had inexperienced counsellors, a stressful working situation in the office or absence due to illness. Some explained that their office was (or had been) involved in other research projects and didn't have time for more. On the other hand many leaders were indeed positive to the study, but they didn't manage to convince their employees to take part. Some told me that the staff resented the idea of being taped or that they didn't have enough experience to feel comfortable with it. In this situation I chose to offer a small gift voucher on 100 NOK to counsellors and clients as thanks for their inconvenience, and soon after at least a few more counsellors were interested.

A few of the counsellors who did accept to take part didn't have that much problems in recruiting clients, while many were less successful. Apart from practical reasons (new job-tasks, time pressure) the most important reason was that they didn't succeed to convince clients to take part, and a few were concerned that such a request would disturb the establishment of a good relationship to the client. Evidently, their lack of success made many of the counsellors feel bad about themselves, and after a while some gave it up. The gift voucher was offered to both parts, but somehow it didn't have the same noticeable effect on the clients. I had to realize that my approach to the field had been too "rationalistic" and that it most likely would be easier to gain the trust of clients to take part if I had gained access only to a few NAV-offices and made arrangements so that I could have recruited the clients myself. In the process I also suggested this opportunity to quite many leaders, but it seemed that this required resources that they didn't have (an office where I could sit etc.).

In retrospect there might also have been normative assumptions in my approach that might have scared away potential collaborators in NAV, for example through my request of a copy of the client's plan. While I was promoting my study at a NAV-office to recruit more participants, a counsellor burst out in a group meeting: "But then we will have to start making plans", whereupon everybody started to laugh. Her comment suggested that making plans was not common practice, which was somewhat surprising, as earlier research suggested that making plans was the rule, not the exception (Møller, Flermoen, and Løyland 2003: 38f.). Of course the culture of this office might here have been somewhat special (or the strain of the NAV-reform might have turned it so), but in asking for copies I nevertheless assumed an ideal practice of making plans. Although I communicated to counsellors "off the record" that a plan should only be returned if actually made, not delivering copies might have framed them as not

quite professional. Thus, counsellors who did not always make plans as supposed to, might have feared that participating in the study would reduce their scope of flexibility to organize a busy workday.

Possibly, my rationalistic approach might also be explained by my own fear that the project would turn into some sort of insider-ethnography. Since I for about three years had worked with claims of disability benefit in another department of NAV, I already had some second-hand knowledge about vocational rehabilitation, by reading reports in individual cases, listening to clients ending vocational rehabilitation, and through phone calls and meetings with transiting clients. Thus, in Alvesson's terms I didn't really need to "break in". My problem was rather in some degree to "break out" from the familiarity of the organizational framework (Alvesson 2003:176). Thus, I can see that my worry about not having enough distance to the field, might have induced me to choose a design that most effectively would get my head out of the everyday practicalities of NAV into learning to do CA with proper "ethnomethodological indifference" (See Section 4.4).

## **4.2 Motivation for taking part?**

It is hard to say whether the participants who did accept to participate, had special motives. The gift voucher was after all a teaser that only a few of them found tempting, and personal boundaries of privacy might be important for both counsellors and clients (The possibility of clients being tempted by the gift voucher because of economic problems will be addressed in the section below.) The counsellors who took part often presented themselves as experienced or competent counsellors having been working with vocational rehabilitation as a fulltime or part-time task for quite a while. Nevertheless, there were also a few counsellors, who didn't have much experience and who appeared to have more idealistic motives for taking part, supporting a good case. For example I was told by a young newly graduated NAV-counsellor, who recently had experienced problems of entrance herself in her recent master study that "not everybody understands the use of research". With this utterance she was portraying herself (and affiliating with me) as being the kind of person to support research.

Similarly, it is hard to say whether the clients who accepted to take part were special in some sense, compared to clients who rejected the invitation. In terms of background variables the data appear to be pretty representative for the population of vocational rehabilitation clients<sup>10</sup>. But, regarding age the data stretched from 20 to 52 years, with so much as half of the group being under 30 years old. This is much younger than in Kristoffersen's study (2008) where

only about 18 percent was under 30 years. Possibly the resistance against being taped was somewhat lesser amongst younger people, being more accustomed to express themselves in different media. Though, it's hard to say for sure, young people might also have been easier to ask to participate. It is also possible that some clients deemed the recording as an assurance that things then would at least proceed "by the book". In the end of one of the encounter, a client jocularly complained into the dictaphone that he had not got the coffee he was promised before the recorder was switched on. Although this "complaint" was only about missing coffee, it is easy to imagine that the recording could function as a resource in other ways too.

### **4.3 Some issues of ethics and reliability**

The issue of rewarding informants for taking part in research project will here not be debated very broadly. As said before, with a design where I was able to recruit participants myself, rewards might not have become necessary at all, but at that moment I deemed this to be a necessary step to be able to recruit informants at all. Time was a serious problem, and although more NAV-offices might have been asked for access, things were not going well and I needed to do something to tempt participation. What nevertheless needs to be addressed, is whether this reward, a gift voucher on 100 NOK, was in accordance with guidelines on research ethics regarding the participants' free and informed consent (NESH 2006: 13), which is particularly important when dealing with vulnerable groups. The issue of rewarding participants must in each case be considered in terms of how much is offered and who is receiving. The value of the gift voucher was here meant to be a symbolic "Thank you for helping" to clients who had a monthly benefit from NAV. Even though younger clients, who often receive lower benefits, might have been more tempted by the voucher, I still think this was not an offer that could not be refused. The issue was first discussed with NSD (the Privacy Ombudsman for research in Norway), who meant that voluntariness was not a problem as long as the money value was this low.

Another issue, which concerns the reliability of the data, is whether the method of recording naturally occurring interaction is affecting the interaction of the participants, thus distorting its assumed "naturalness". In the beginning of one of the recordings the client made a joke of the resemblance to a police interrogation, thus commenting the presence of the dictaphone. Of course, in open research designs, people as meaning making creatures cannot be examined without their consciousness of this "overhearer", and this possibility of affecting rather than merely documenting interaction has, following Labov, been called "the observer's paradox (Have 2007). Thus, will the recording for example prevent the client from talking about

sensitive matters or the counsellor from making difficult rejections? That is, would the participants be fulfilling tasks in an impression-managing-manner and not in a business-as-usual-manner? The observer's paradox was in this project a worry that affected how the written information about the study was formulated, for instance the absence of the term "user participation" which I worried would induce the counsellor to be specially focused on this aspect. However, although it is reasonable to think that the counsellor wanted to appear professional and so on, it is here believed that the participants' opportunities to manipulate the course of the events after all are limited.

Surely, the recording is likely to strengthen the participants' "awareness of genre" (Femø Nielsen and Beck Nielsen 2005: 222), but this is still not a performance in a Goffmanian (1971) sense. Encounters do not unfold at a theatre scene where the participants can follow ready scripts. In natural communication participants need to monitor the speech of co-participants and also design their own talk to fit to the context so-far produced (Heritage 1984b), and to do so whatever comes around. As remarked by Maynard the contingencies that actors experience according to the temporal unfolding of actual events, suggest that there simply is no time to plan one's next move: "real life offers no time out" (Maynard 1991: 279). Hence, in dyadic encounters as these where both parties are expected to speak, it is more likely that participants, although not wholly "forgetting" the recorder, are too absorbed in the momentary talk to do very much about it, not least, because there is a limit for how much the human brain can deal with at once (Femø Nielsen and Beck Nielsen 2005). It is said that Heritage once compared talking with playing tennis (Hopper 2005). Though the serve might be strategically placed, the subsequent balls are nevertheless hard to predict, suggesting that in the end there is little need to worry about the talk's "naturalness".

#### **4.4 Choice of research issues**

CA likes to think of itself as an inductive and empirical enterprise, where the general tone seems to be: "Hey! I think I have seen something really interesting happening here. Let's take a look!" (Have 1997: 1). Data should be discovered and noticed as significant or interesting in its own right, and not because of some given theory (academic or personal) of what the talk represents. This research policy is expressed as "ethnomethodological indifference" to study members' accounts "wherever and by whomever they are done, while abstaining from judgments of their adequacy, value, importance, necessity, practicality, success or consequentiality" (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970: 845). But the choice of research issues treated

in this thesis has perhaps not been all in line with this ideal of “unmotivated looking” (Psathas 1995).

I for my part was from the start prepared to look at proposal-sequences (although I had no idea of what they should look like). The overall impression of this project might be that conversations, where strong or “active” clients make and account for proposals, have been given priority (with three papers) whereas clients without solutions is the topic of only one article (although they were much active too in accounting for what was noticeable not there). Of course, I could simply argue that this is quite natural since there in my data were more clients with plans to suggest than without. Besides, earlier research suggest that as much as 60 percent of clients report that they want to find solutions on their own (Jessen 1997: 10). But apart from that, I must confess that from the very start the idea to analyse negotiation sequences appealed to me. How come?

My sociological background might have provided me with a certain, say “conflict orientation”, sensitizing me to notice decisive moves and episodes where clients and counsellors were not (all) aligned in their projects. But I also think that my work experience from NAV as an executive officer on disability benefit (2004-2007) might have given me a dynamic view on the client. It has been suggested that both social workers and researchers of ethnomethodology strive to understand the largely ignored and taken-for-granted within encounters (Montigny 2007), and, starting up the project, I remember being “naturally curious” as an executive officer about what the client was doing with her speech. (What does she want?) Also, in reading reports from Aetat, I could remember being curious about why (on earth) certain employment measures had been chosen, whose suggestion was this?

I think my background both as executive officer and sociologist, might have affected, first, choice of methodological approach and perhaps also what I have found interesting or noteworthy in the transcriptions. Thus, I share the view of those arguing for treating CA more as a hermeneutic enterprise (Arminen 2000; Buttny 1993) than as a strict empirical science (Have 1997). This suggests that also this kind of data is constructed (rather than all natural) and, not least, that a subjective dimension is unavoidable in terms of choosing what phenomenon to study (Brox 1989). Much likely a researcher with a different background might have found other activities than the negotiation of action plans to be interesting to study.

## 4.5 Data construction

The audio data was transcribed by using the transcription system, developed by Gail Jefferson, which has become a “common language” (Have 2007) in studies of verbal interaction. This transcription system was designed to report as good as possibly on how the speech was produced by the participants themselves in real time, in terms of sequence, pace, volume, stress, intonation etc. Transcribing according to this system is much time consuming, but with so few cases it was possible to transcribe all of it. Some parts of the conversations were nevertheless let out as “uninteresting”, for example when the counsellor was talking on the phone or when talk was not related to institutional-core activities such as instructing the client on the route to somewhere. Besides, the first transcription, before identifying interesting parts, was quite rough. The turn-taking organization was presented as well as other qualities, but the length of pauses was for example not measured, only intuitively indicated by dots (...). In pieces of data chosen for publication more details were added and gaps and pauses were measured by using a stopwatch (which suggests that gaps and pauses should be deemed as tentative, not “hard facts”).

It should be noted that there are different views among researchers regarding how much naturalism transcriptions should be loaded with, and I, in contrast to most CA researchers, hold a middle position. There are, for instance, disagreements regarding in what degree standard orthography should be modified. On many Norwegian dialects one would say “e” instead of “er” (in English: “is”), but this way of representing the speech, would make it much harder to read the data extracts. Thus, most of the time, the data extracts in this dissertation will use standard orthography, but of course not standardizing dialectal expressions, misnomers etc. Likewise, the extracts in this thesis will only mark out intonation and stress when this is “noticeable there”, doing something more than what any speaker of the Norwegian language would do. Although relying on my competence as a native speaker is indeed fuzzy and subjective in this respect, I think this alternative is better than making quite unremarkable speech look strange.

Another issue is related to the translations from native speech into the language of the journals (from Norwegian into English). Within CA studies it is usual to show both the original speech and the translated versions, following the principle that the readers should have as much information as possible. Thus, presenting a translation only as in some of the articles in this dissertation, is not recommended in CA-research (Have 2007). (See Paul ten Have (2007: 109) where different alternatives are described). The drawback with a multilingual data

presentation is that the extracts might be quite extensive and hard to read, especially for readers who are not familiar with CA. As I thought my findings to be interesting to a wider audience, I followed what, to me at least, seemed to be the preference of the journal in question. To reduce loss of detail, the extracts were translated, not always by following idiomatic English, but more like a word-to-word translation of the original speech. Readers who are interested in the original Norwegian version can either find them in the articles (article III and IV) or in appendix 2 (article I and II).

Lastly, in presenting data, the anonymity of clients is of course very important, especially in a population of only 5 million inhabitants. To manage this risk certain employment measures or preferred vocations, might have been replaced with something similar (turning the “watchmaker” into an “optician”). In a couple of cases the client’s story is atypical, statistical speaking (for example wanting to be a watchmaker), which on its own or in combination with other information in the talk, might have lead others to identify the client.

#### **4.6 Is discourse data sufficient?**

In CA there is a procedure of “validation through next turn” (Peräkylä 2004) which makes a strong case in terms of “internal validity”(Yin 2009: 40)<sup>11</sup> since the claimed connection between verbal actions can be directly observed by the researchers and even readers, given that the data are given a reliable representation. It might nevertheless be asked whether discourse data alone is sufficient to understand participants’ accounting practices within this setting. As already mentioned, talk very much relies on indexical meanings where participants “fill in the rest” (Weeks 1995), and if the researcher lacks knowledge of the particular rationalities of institutional settings, I also think that the analysis of “what is going on” might be rather shallow or even wrong as Arminen writes:

If the analyst is unable to trace the relevant features the parties are oriented to in the setting, the analysis may remain superficial with regard to the institutional practice even if the sequential course of interaction could be accounted for (Arminen 2000: 438).

In short, the answer to the question of supplementary data sources should depend on how much knowledge the researcher already has about the setting in question.

In this case I believed I knew the logic of the field pretty well, not least as I in my job as an executive officer, treating clients’ disability claims, used to read the documentation from the vocational rehabilitation process. Of course, in starting up this project, I examined this institutional framework in more detail, by making myself familiar with the legislation and the

guidelines of vocational rehabilitation etc. In my opinion I didn't need more context to make sense of the talk, which suggests that the ethnomethodological requirement of "unique adequacy" (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970) where the researcher is competent as a member (more than a researcher), was sufficiently fulfilled. (I think "complete submersion in practices"(Rawls 2006: 92) is hard to claim whatever base of observation.) Researchers of social interaction, who have made interviews as well, have reported that these were not used in the analysis, other than as background material (Cedersund and Säljö 1993; Mäkitalo 2002).

Besides, problems might arise when you have data from different sources. For example, a client much referred to in the studies (id number 9) had on the questionnaire marked out that he did not have any plans before entering the meeting, although a plan was indeed presented in the meeting (as well as detailed information on different available schools, numerous arguments, reflections etc.). From a CA perspective the participants' secondary comments cannot be used as a reliable source for validating an interactional analysis (what I meant to say was...), because the secondary source is not seen as part of the first order action that is being scrutinized. Thus, being interviewed by a researcher on one's daily practice or answering a questionnaire, is neither "the same thing" as the recorded conversation, nor is it "simply commenting" the first order practice. Rather, they should be seen as independent actions, to be treated in separate analysis. From this perspective the value of interview data is thus a dubious resource to understand talk, which instead of confirming or disconfirming the first order phenomenon, produces external (theoretical) discussions explaining how versions about the same can be so different.

Eventually, it might be argued that the interaction would have been better understood if the interaction had been video-recorded as this method certainly provides more details (gaze, body positioning and gestures). However, in this study interaction was mainly understood as verbal interaction, of course, including vocal activities such as laughter and coughing. Now following Sack's principle that the researcher should provide as much as possible of what the participants themselves orient to, video is no doubt the best option in studying face-to-face encounters. But I didn't choose video-recording because I expected this option to make access to the field even harder, which I, in retrospect, think was a real concern. Apart from this, it might be argued that this much detail was not necessary either. True, I was a few times bothered that I couldn't see what the participants were doing (such as looking at a study catalogue or filling out forms), but these occasions were quite few and they didn't represent a



serious problem in the research process. As marked out by Buttny, the research questions dictate the level of detail, and perhaps accounting activities do not call for as much detail as other phenomena, for example investigating affect in interaction (Buttny 1993: 57). Still, others claim that nonverbal conduct in any case is subordinate to the verbal conduct since none of the findings described in CA research have been significantly altered by adding nonverbal conduct (Drew 2005).

#### **4.7 Generalisation**

The fifteen recorded encounters provided about 8 hours of recordings and this amount of data can seldom provide enough instances to make generalizations in a distributional sense. This does not suggest that findings cannot be generalized to encounters in similar settings, apart for those examined, but the basis for making generalisations is then analytic, rather than empirical. Although building collections of similar instances is desirable to reveal common or even universal patterns, small CA studies like this one usually relies on a logic of generalization associated with case studies (Peräkylä 2004). On analytical generalisation in case studies Yin writes: “In analytical generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory” (Yin 2009: 43).

But how is this realized in ethnomethodological/CA research, where the ambition is to unravel data’s endogenous structures in a more inductive or grounded fashion? Given CA’s “emic” orientation the theoretical ambition of analysis has been understood as to “get a theoretical grasp of the interaction’s underlying ‘rules’ and ‘principles’”(Have 2007: 150). Obviously, some of the practices described in this dissertation do not build theory in this sense all from the ground, as they utilize and develop findings from previous research, from mundane and/or institutional settings. For instance, the practice to provide an account when a preferred answer cannot be provided (article II), is certainly not a rule discovered in this study, but how this comes about in this particular context is addressed as well the missing self-orientation of accountings in CA writings (see also article III). But although CA adheres to a cumulative ideal of research, the aim of any analysis is to make sense of the particular phenomenon in question.

Psathas has called the epistemology of CA “the method of instances” (Psathas 1995) as even one instance is sufficient to be analysed as an interesting social organisation in its own right:

That this particular social action occurred is evidence that the machinery for its production is culturally available, involves members’ competencies, and is therefore possibly (and probably)

reproducible. Its recurrence, however, is not proof of the adequacy of an analysis, because the analytic task is to provide a wholly adequacy of an analysis of just how this instance is organized (Psathas 1995: 50).

Thus, the occurrence of something, even if it occurs only once, evidences the availability of a cultural resource. Following Sack's view of culture as exhibiting "order at all points", any case will do to display the cultural machinery (McHoul 2009: 19). As expressed by Sacks in one of his lectures "...it would not really matter very much what it is we look at, if we look at it carefully enough" (Sacks 1984: 23). In line with this Peräkylä puts the issue of generalization in terms of possibility: "*Social practices that are possible, i.e. possibilities of language use*, are the central objects of all conversation analytic case studies on interaction in particular institutional settings" (Peräkylä 2004: 297).

In the first article of this dissertation, two different ways of proposal-making are described and contrasted, with only one instance of each. Many instances of the same may give a broader understanding of the variation of a phenomenon (Peräkylä 2004). Thus, it cannot be ruled out that other methods for proposal-making exist (and are worth studying too), that purer specimens of the methods exists (but is not recorded), and surely this small scale analysis cannot say how commonly the resource is adopted across encounters (distinguishing a "rule" from a "resource"). On the other hand it can be claimed that the implying (or alluding) way of making a proposal is not an accidental event, but demonstrates the existence of a shared, cultural resource, or a possibility, which may be adopted by clients in other institutional settings as well (in fact, by any competent member who needs to make contingent suggestions in an unpredictable social environment.)

## 5. Summary of the studies

### **Article I: Accepted and resisted: the client's responsibility for making proposals in activation encounters**

*Janne Solberg: Published in Text & Talk, 31:733-752, 2011*

Clients of vocational rehabilitation are expected to participate actively in making an individual action plan. For instance, by suggesting appropriate employment measures, such as education in regular schools or job training. The article investigates how clients manage the counsellor's solution-eliciting "what"-question in planning sequences by comparing the clients' answers in two cases where a long-term education were wanted. The objective is to explicate how clients practically comply with the expectation to formulate solutions. Especially, the analysis is centred on understanding differences in the answer-format adopted.

The analysis suggests that the responsibility to come up with plans/ideas might be accepted by the client through producing a direct answer (extract 1), but also that clients' accountings might function as an interactional resource for resisting and transforming the projected speaker roles (extract 2).

The professional's eliciting question make relevant formulation of a proposal/idea in the answer-slot. But, according to Raymond (2003), questions also make relevant certain *types* of answers, and the professional's solution-eliciting what-question projects that the client conforms to this element when designing a response (I would like to do X). In extract 1 the client's proposal to become a teacher is easily heard as an answer to the eliciting question, and it thus represents, in Raymond's terms, a "type conforming" answer. This is not the case in the second extract where the client adopts what here is called a "proposal-implying telling". In this case, a suggestion of becoming a policeman is projected, but is then aborted and replaced with biographical "tellings". Compared to extract 1 this implying or alluding path suggests a more "distributed responsibility" (Jacoby and Ochs 1995) for talking a contingent proposal into being, which very much relies on the counsellor's willingness to cooperate.

The practice of implying a proposal demonstrates a potential for clients to negotiate the responsibility of distributed speaker-roles. One could say that while the counsellor's eliciting question represented a predefined "top-down" approach for talking proposals into being, the client's alluding manner transformed the course of events into a more "bottom-up" approach (Drew and Heritage 1992: 23), more apt for managing contingent matter in speech. Thus,

proposal-implying tellings might be one way for the client to balance the need to get his proposal into the agenda, while reducing overt accountability for raising a “rejectable” issue. Despite of its cautiousness, this case of proposal-implying represents a pragmatic line of action, increasing the client’s control, as this path makes it possible to monitor the counsellor’s stance on a turn-by-turn basis. This strategy might thus be apt to protect the client’s social face (Goffman 1967a) in a potential non-aligning environment.

## **Article II: Activation encounters: dilemmas of accountability in constructing clients as “knowledgeable”**

*Janne Solberg: Published in Qualitative Social Work, 10:381-398, 2011*

Earlier research have suggested that professionals might threaten clients’ positive face (Goffman 1967a) through addressing morally sensitive topics, such as economics or illness. This article suggests that this might be the case even when professionals, in line with policy ideals of client participation, ask questions which are meant to facilitate the client’s participation in the planning process.

Counsellors of vocational rehabilitation routinely elicit clients to provide plans/ideas. By a direct and introspective question-design, they orient to clients as knowledgeable and able to suggest appropriate employment measures which might resolve their employment problem. Given this “recipient design” (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974), reporting proposals or ideas is projected as preferred in the client’s answer-slot . But for some reason not all clients fulfil the institutional request to formulate plans. The aim of this article is to use ethnomethodological conversation analysis to investigate how professionals’ eliciting questions produce dilemmas of (moral) accountability for clients who do not have plans/ideas to suggest. How do these clients understand and align to the expectations of preferred next actions set up, and how are issues of accountability managed in talk? From the client’s point of view, this dilemma might be put as to constitute herself as a “good” or “active” client despite of not having much to suggest.

The analysis shows that clients’, often delayed, responses invoke accounting elements, which suggest that clients do orient to the “morality of knowing” (Bergmann 1998) inherent in the eliciting question (suggesting that clients have proposals/ideas to report). To manage this expectation clients invoked various “no-fault”(Heritage 1984b) elements accounting for not

delivering the preferred action. These functioned as to excuse a tentative delivery with reference to the client's lack of vocabulary (extract 1), to defend a no-news reply as proper with reference to the client's prior efforts on the matter (extract 2), and to excuse absent proposals by indexing health problems (extract 3). In addition to these attempts at creating alignment to discursive and situated identities by means of accounts, a fourth extract showed a client that actually organized her speech as passing in terms of making a proposal. The client in this extract adopts indirect reported speech to formulate a proposal, although the mimic voice as well as her repeated change of topic strongly suggests that this was not an authentic suggestion after all.

The findings indicate that to clients without ready plans/ideas, the eliciting question might be experienced as somewhat challenging. However, the findings also suggests that institutional identities are not unilaterally constructed through professionals' inquiries as clients are very much able to introduce new relevancies which makes it possible to display proper alignment, both as discourse partners and clients of vocational rehabilitation. Thus, although not knowing might represent an "incident" in Goffman's terms (Goffman 1967a), clients of activation encounters are much competent in terms of invoking accounting practices that are suitable for preserving social solidarity as well as the client's social face.

### **Article III: "Making sense of accounting practices: Clients' reports of abandoned plans in Norwegian activation encounters"**

Janne Solberg (Unpublished paper)

In vocational rehabilitation encounters the counsellor and the client both participate in the process of working out an action plan. For instance, clients are routinely elicited to suggest solutions. However, if the client suggests an option, the counsellor often displays a "testing" orientation (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990) to it, for example by discussing alternative options. Since this topic presumes that alternative proposals exist and should be discussed before settling the issue, such inquiries might represent a threat to the client's "case". The client's report of an abandoned proposal in the answer-slot provides/accounts for a misaligning response, while evading the counsellor's investigating agenda in a diplomatic manner.

The article investigates in detail the client’s active resistance to the counsellor’s requests for/suggestion of alternative proposals. The objective of the article is to explicate the practice of “reporting abandoned proposals”. How are “abandoned proposals” occasioned and packaged in the talk? How can abandoned plans/ideas be a resource to resist the counsellor’s investigating agenda? And how do they work as accounting practices (retroactive and proactive)?

In the CA literature on accounts, both relation/face-maintaining (Heritage 1988) and agreement-intimating (Firth 1995) functions have been described. Compared to this research, this article documents an orientation with the account-giver that is more self-attentive, more in the spirit of the pioneer writers on accounts (Goffman 1967b; Scott and Lyman 1968).

Clients’ accountings are in line with central CA findings on how dispreferred actions are packaged, which are described as being accounted for, made indirect and packed into the back of the turn (Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). The practice of reporting abandoned proposals is here found to have what Pomerantz (1984) called an “agreement-preface” organization, where an agreement component is followed by a disagreeing component introduced through the contrast sign “but”. Although the first element of the response seems to comply with the terms of the moving action, the crux of the action lies in the following disagreeing element. In the five instances, examined in this article, clients’ reports of abandoned proposals have the following organization:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| The counsellor asks for or<br>suggests an alternative plan | → | The client evades the action through<br>reporting an abandoned proposal:<br>a) Report of an option considered in the past<br>b) Contrastive device “but”<br>c) Undermining description of a) |
|--|---|--|

The first element, mentioning a measure/vocation that has been considered at an earlier occasion (a) appears to be going along with the counsellor’s agenda of considering alternative plans. However, through the contrast device “but” (b) a negative stance is nevertheless displayed through an undermining description (c) of the option in question (“sedentary work”, “very boring”). The undermining description explains and argues, though in an indirect manner, why the client, after all, sees it as an unlikely option.

Compared to earlier research outlining accounting as an other-attending activity, designed to preserve social solidarity across dispreferred turns (Heritage 1988), the analysis suggests that the practice of reporting abandoned proposals is also adopted for justifying in a retroactively manner that the client's obligation to consider alternative options have been fulfilled. Thus, apart from preserving social relations, saving the client's own face is probably an important concern. Moreover, in proactive terms, the practice of reporting abandoned proposals is not adopted to produce conversational agreement (Firth 1995), but rather to decline the topic by suggesting it to be exhausted.

#### **Article IV: Arguing in professional-client encounters: Building cases through second-hand assessments**

*Janne Solberg: Accepted on 12 December 2013 for publication in Pragmatics & Society*

The policy of client participation suggests that clients of vocational rehabilitation should have an active role in planning the services, but how does this come about in practice? When negotiating employment, measures clients in this material sometimes summarise the speech of a third, non-present party ("X says that this is a very good profession"). In this article five instances of invoking second-hand assessment (indirect reported speech) are analysed as an interactional resource for building a case. By utilizing the tools of ethnomethodological conversation analysis, the study demonstrates how second-hand assessments can function as an argumentative resource for negotiating appropriate measures. The article investigates how clients use second-hands assessments to misalign with the counsellor's investigating agenda, and also, how the client's stance as aligning with the cited source is produced in talk.

The analysis outlines an "opposing" and a "promoting" function of reporting second-hand assessments. The opposing pattern occurs in responding turns where the counsellor attempts to scrutinize the client's plan (extract 1-3), while the promoting pattern is occasioned in initiating actions, seeking the co-participant's acceptance (extract 4-5). Regarding the opposing function, the analysis suggests that the client does not actually deal with the particular issues introduced by the counsellor. Instead, second-hand assessments are used to fend off these issues by bringing in a better grasp on the matter at hand (that is, new relevancies supporting the client's case). The analysis shows that this re-directing of relevancies might be accomplished through a more or less open display of misalignment to

the counsellor's first move. Thus, the interactional utility of adopting second-hand assessments might be to close an issue, potentially troublesome to the client's case.

The analysis makes evident that what is an authoritative source is actually a very context dependent issue. (It certainly doesn't have to be a "certified expert".) But in spite of somewhat low formal authority, the source is in each case constructed as holding a special insider-knowledge (a subject, a study arrangement, a vocation or an employment measure), not least by providing descriptions that convey an entitlement to know (experience, education, positions). The participants are arguing from a "principle of best source" (Pomerantz 1984b), though exactly what rule is invoked, and what conclusion is supported, is usually only implied, rather than made explicit in talk. The analysis nevertheless shows that the client very much align with or share the stance of the source being referred to, by providing (embedded) comments or assessments. Hence, despite of a remote footing the speech is easily heard as expressing the client's own stance.

This straightforward alignment with the cited source suggests that the practice of invoking second-hand assessments can function as an argumentatively "strong move" giving momentarily access to a remote field of knowledge, more than mitigating the interactional difficulties of disagreeing.



## **6. Findings: Defending cases and faces**

### **6.1 Accountings as multi-tools for resisting**

The studies add to the broad topic of “client resistance” and dynamics in institutional encounters, and they document the quite complex competence that is needed to be a client of vocational rehabilitation. In contrast to welfare policies prescribing “user participation” in welfare encounters, this dissertation explores in a much empirical fashion what participation actually means in terms of planning and discussing vocational rehabilitation services. Despite that clients within many institutional encounters tend to participate in second position (Peräkylä, Ruusuvoori, and Lindfors 2007: 139), the findings of the study nevertheless document a solid capacity for clients to resist and reconstruct the terms set up by the counsellor’s first action in several respects. Thus, it is here suggested that clients’ accounting practices represent flexible “multi-tools” for defending cases, and, as we will return to later in this section, perhaps even moral identities (faces).

Article I and II have deepened our understanding of how client-centred questions (that are meant to facilitate the client’s active participation in finding solutions) might be delicate social events when analysed from the client’s position. Moreover, article III and IV have brought attention to the fact that clients have a mundane argumentative competence, demonstrating clients’ ability to be their own lawyers (rather than this being a capacity that must be “given” to them as sometimes suggested (Brodkin 1997: 26)). The studies shows how the counsellor’s investigating agenda can imply potential, alternative realities (alternative vocational rehabilitation options) that the client, to defend his case, needed to resist (sometimes in an evasive manner, using an agreement-preface organization (article III), or more assertively through adopting second-hand accounts (article IV).)

The findings of the articles might be summarized as follows:

	Article I	Article II	Article III	Article IV
Counsellor's first move	Questions eliciting proposals/ideas	Questions eliciting proposals/ideas	Investigating queries to proposal	Investigative queries to proposal
Client's dilemma	How to make a contingent proposal, which might be turned down?	How to align as a good (enough) client although having nothing to suggest?	How to misalign with the counsellor, while preserving relations and faces?	How to misalign with the counsellor, while lacking first-hand knowledge?
Function of client's accounting	Question resistance, activity-restructuring action	Question resistance, accounting	Investigation resistance, accounting and arguing	Investigation resistance, arguing (through a better grasp)
Descriptive terms	Non-conforming response, implying (alluding) accounts	Dis-preferred action, defending or excusing accounts	Misalignment, evasiveness, agreement-preface accounts	Misalignment, reported speech, second-hand accounts
What is negotiated? (primarily)	Activity-type (terms of talking, speaker-roles)	Speaker's (moral) accountability	Speaker's accountability, appropriateness of Proposal	Appropriateness of proposal, agenda/topic.
What is at stake?	Social solidarity Face Case	Social solidarity Face	Social solidarity Case/Face	Social solidarity Case Face

Related to Hirschman (1970) famous typology of “voice” and “exit”, describing how organization members behave in situations of discontent, it has been argued that welfare clients are prone to do neither, since “voice” is risky (in case of complaints services can be held back) and “exit” means loss of benefit<sup>12</sup> (Brodkin 1997: 20f, 25). The studies in this dissertation describe a broad range of resisting actions, from more covert alluding actions (article I) into more open arguing (article III and IV). The findings of this study might thus be taken as demonstrating that at least some clients dare to express their overt resistance (voice). However, in this data the interactional “purpose” of the client’s voicing is often paired with an interactional need to escape the counsellor’s project (to elicit plans or to investigate plans). Thus, one could say that in welfare encounters voice may be adopted in the service of exit, that is to proactively resist the professional’s interactional project. In this situated reading,

voice and exit are labels describing events in social micro-processes, rather than mutually exclusive principles explaining individual decisions.

Of course, the studies have not only taught us about the clients' practices, but also about the counsellor's role in activating, interpreting and acting upon them. Across the described practices the counsellor needed to figure out what the client's accountings were doing apart from describing or reporting some matter of fact. Usually the counsellor was, as formulated by Drew, "left to determine the consequences of a report for some proposed or projected arrangement" (Drew 1984: 131). This implicitness might be useful for clients in terms of negotiating participation, moral adequacy and cases while sustaining relations and social identities. But possibly the implicitness of clients' accounting practices, avoiding to make consequences explicit, also displays a common understanding that there is a division of labour between the parties, and that it belongs to the professional's "deontic authority" (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2012) to draw conclusions and make decisions.

## **6.2 Clients' accounting practices: Defending cases**

### **6.2.1 Active client resistance**

Earlier research on client participation across institutional settings have suggested that clients' resistance mostly is of the unstated and indirect kind (Barnard, Cruice, and Playford 2010), see Section 1.4. Without defying these findings, this dissertation has mainly contributed to more knowledge of clients' more active efforts of negotiating.

The analyses have demonstrated that clients' defensive orientation occurred within a special discursive environment. In response to the counsellor's solution eliciting question, the client is expected to propose an option, but the client's suggestion is seldom accepted on the spot by counsellors. Instead, the client's proposal is (softly) "tested" (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990) through the counsellor's investigation. But since the counsellor's projected line of action could pave the way for alternative options, the client has a pragmatic need to do away with them. Thus, in this material clients' accounting practices often have an argumentative, reality-constructing dimension, and rather than simply reporting and so on, clients are seen as "constructing a case" (Arminen 2005: 88). This might be accomplished through invoking descriptive elements supporting the client's proposal ("a very good profession" in article IV), as well as portraying himself as "eligible" for the desired services in question as described

elsewhere (Hydén 1996: 852; Mäkitalo 2003: 9). But in addition to this positive argumentation, a more negative way of arguing can be invoked as well, by demonstrating a negative stance to an option (see article III).

Hence, in this negotiating context the client's actions and embedded stance-taking displayed an overall defensive orientation, protecting her own suggestion against (potential) threats - suggested or implied in the counsellor's move. This account of "active client resistance" is very different from the one Stivers found within the setting of parent-physicians negotiations about antibiotics treatment, defined as actions which "make relevant a response by physicians" (Stivers 2007: 114). The proposal-implying telling described in article I might resemble the appealing practices which Stivers describes (like when patients report their past experience with antibiotics instead of asking directly) (Stivers 2007: 148). However, Stiver's definition does not capture the investigation resistance described in article III and IV since success in investigation sequences (from the client's point of view) often means blocking-like actions, rather than extending a topic or accepting an option. The studies have brought to our attention that in the process of pursuing particular services, the display of proper misalignment in proposal/topic progression is another important aspect of how active clienthood is performed. It is thus difficult to give a simple definition of what active client resistance means in sequential terms, as this can occur both in initiating actions, inviting the professional's response, as well as in responsive actions, somehow blocking or evading the professional's interactional project.

The practice of reporting abandoned proposals as well as introducing a better grasp through second-hands accounts, are two (of certainly several) available resources for organizing talk as to oppose and close down a troublesome topic. In article III it was demonstrated that the practice of reporting an abandoned proposal made it possible for the client to pay lip service to the counsellor's project to talk about alternative options while the client's undermining description enacted and/or accounted for the client's rejection of the option at hand. (One could perhaps say that this diplomatic move neatly established the issue as the client's "self-conflict", rather than overtly misaligning with the counsellor's agenda of considering alternatives.) Moreover, article IV suggested that second-hand accounts could be an argumentative resource for fending off the issues introduced by the counsellor, by implicitly suggesting that the new grasp, stemming from an authorized source, was more reliable and more important to consider.

### **6.2.2 Know-how in indexing appropriate arguments**

To successfully accomplish this active clienthood, a complex competence is needed in terms of knowledge and sensitivity to co-participants as well as to the institutional setting, or what Stokes and Hewitt referred to as “the duality of alignment” (Stokes and Hewitt 1976). This means that to make successful defensive moves, the client needs to produce accounts that are attuned to the institutional “vocabularies of motives” (Mills 1940) specific for the setting of vocational rehabilitation. The findings of this thesis suggest that client’s accounting practices might negotiate the definition of the situation in at least two respects. The client might of course stick to the vocabulary introduced by the counsellor by implying that the counsellor has got things wrong at the level of facts. Possibly, this was the case in extract 2 in article II, where the client claimed that things already had been thought over, thus correcting the assumption of the eliciting question that more was needed.

But rather than co-operating all along with the terms of the professional’s question, the client might also to use accounts to change the focus of the conversation by indexing a *different* accounting vocabulary (article III and IV), that is, to introduce more important concerns/arguments that should be attended to (health concerns, interests, quality of vocation/education program). This is not to suggest that the participants negotiate vocabularies at a very abstract level, quite the opposite, (as mentioned, the “facts” in clients’ accountings often tend to be introduced as to “speak for themselves”(Drew 1992: 516)). Evidence might of course be introduced as a subsequent support for an argument, but more often in this material the argument is put forward in and through the description of facts. For instance, reporting second-hand assessments (article IV) as a better grasp (“They say it is a very good profession”), is implicitly indexing a reasoning, supporting the client’s case (One should choose a good vocation), albeit its consequences are seldom fully explicated by the client (So I should choose this as a profession).

The resistance thus often had a positive dimension, where the client contributed with matter not asked for (Heritage and Clayman 2010: 247). Since the clients thereby demonstrates an ability to “go on”, without initiating repairs regarding meaning and institutional relevance, they appear to have a shared understanding of what is going on, which is indeed “smoothly running” (Mäkitalo and Säljö 2002: 18). That is, the participants are capable of going along as “cultural colleagues” (Garfinkel 1967: 11), rather than being in “worlds apart” (Robinson 1978) (as also implied in Mischler’s (1984) seminal account of different voices in medical interviews). Surely, this “knowhow” in making pragmatic moves and appropriate

arguments/accounts does not necessarily embrace very detailed knowledge of the institutional framework, but probably enough to orient to certain proposals as “contingent issues” to be carefully negotiated rather than taken for granted (Asmuß 2007; Curl and Drew 2008). In this data many clients do orient to the “bureaucratic voice” (Cedersund and Säljö 1993) by making proposals and accounts that are well attuned to an institutional line of reasoning. Hence, the findings of this study do support the claim that the dichotomy between professionals’ knowledge and clients’ lay-knowledge is a bit of an oversimplification (Drew and Sorjonen 1997) .

Moreover, the unease of Ian Shaw about there being anything like a “pure” lay perspective in the first place is here shared. In his paper “How lay are lay beliefs?” Shaw argues:

The point that I am arguing here is that in actively searching for meaning, patients and lay people can, and in most circumstances frequently do, adopt the expert/professionals’ explanations and interpretations about their health and illness and come to accept such rationality. It becomes ‘common sense’ to do so (Shaw 2002: 292).

As Shaw puts it the very concept of ‘layness’ would imply a counterfactual proposition to the professionalized society which simply does not exist (Shaw 2002: 293). Instead, all members of a society are familiar with expert knowledge of some kind, which would suggest that invasion or rationalization of the “lifeworld” is the normal state of things. Much likely the client’s perspective over the life-course is being formed and transformed by a multitude of lay and professional sources. Perhaps more important than sorting out the origins of peoples’ knowledge as Shaw suggests, is demonstrating how various epistemological sources can be invoked to perform social actions.

In article IV about second-hand accounts, it was evident that both laypersons and professionals might function as a useful resource for supporting a case. The analysis demonstrated that although care was taken to frame the source as a professional with a special entitlement to know (experience, education, vocation), the issue of who is an “expert” is actually a very context dependent, it does not have to be a professional! This insight might possibly be connected to the widespread sociological idea of social networks.

Within this thinking, a person’s network is compared to a “market” and the accumulated resources are understood as “social capital”: “On this “market” not only feelings and emotional support are exchanged, but also goods, services, knowledge, experience and other resources” (Schieffloe 1992: 32). As suggested in Mark Granovetter’s (1973) article “The Strength of Weak Ties”, such resources might also come from less intimate relations. But,

apart from the advantage of getting knowledge about an opportunity, as described in research on peer-effects in welfare participation (see Markussen and Røed 2012 for an overview), article IV in this dissertation can be read as demonstrating how second-hand knowledge can be an interactional or rhetorical resource *within* welfare encounters as well. In this regard ethnomethodology offers an empirical approach where the social capital dimension of having second-hand knowledge can be studied as members' in situ resource as an "interactional capital". The study of talk-as-interaction thus explicates that having second-hand knowledge is not merely a cognitive state of processing information as this knowledge needs to be practically managed in social life.

Institutional roles in NAV encounters are then largely realized through quite mundane ways of talking and reasoning. (Possibly, this is less the case in institutional contexts which involves a body of very specialized knowledge, such as genetic counselling, but even here most institutional practices are suggested to have their home base in ordinary conversation (Lehtinen 2007: 424)). Thus, in our case it is a bit tempting to suggest that rather than a missing lay perspective, an independent expert system of knowledge is not very easy to identify, hence there is no practical need to translate between different "languages" or "worlds". Following this the accounting vocabularies of the setting can perhaps be seen as grounded in "common sense" or what Bruner called a culture's "folk psychology"<sup>13</sup> (Bruner 1990: 35), rather than in a professional rationality on side of it. Alternatively, it might be argued that the expert reasoning involved, like the motivation psychology informing "the actor model" in Aetat (see Section 2.3), has become "common sense", but this is a hen or egg issue that cannot be pursued here.

## **6.3 Defending moral accountability and faces**

### **6.3.1 Managing and avoiding client accountability**

The impression of the prior section, primarily understanding clients' accounting practises as pragmatic case construction, needs to be balanced. Although clients' accountings do co-construct a definition of the situation, arguing that something is the case in the world (and in more deontic terms thereby imply that an option should be chosen or not), a different sense of accounting is at work as well.

The account term has in this dissertation been used in a quite loose (ethnomethodological) sense; describing, reporting, telling, representing (Burnett 1987; Buttny 1993), but it also have a more narrow sense “in which social actors give accounts of what they are doing in terms of reasons, motives or causes” (Heritage 1988: 128). As mentioned in Section 3.4 this narrow understanding originated in Scott and Lyman’s seminal paper, which understood accounts as explanation devices to be employed “whenever an action is subjected to valuative inquiry”. That is, accounts are understood as responding to a “priming move”(Laura 2003: 82) or what Goffman within the corrective interchange called “the challenge” (Goffman 1967b: 20). In contrast, the findings of this study confirm the EM/CA standing that accountability represents a more constant challenge in interaction. For instance, in terms of dispreferred actions there are normative standards “requiring” an account in conversation (Heritage 1988) even no accusations or blames (priming move) explicitly request so.

This was the case in article II where clients without plans to report in response to solution-eliciting inquiries invoked accounting elements like lack of vocabulary, earlier good efforts, earlier considerations, problem of health. Through this account vocabulary clients could excuse or justify that a preferred action was not produced in response to the counsellor’s eliciting question. Thus, the findings of article II seem to be in accordance with the usual understanding of accounts as a remedy device for not complying with local expectations. The same goes for the practice of reporting abandoned proposals (article III), where the undermining description explained and justified why the client could not make a real suggestion (attempts had been done, without success).

A more future-oriented orientation was present in article I (extract 2) where the client’s reportings were doing something else than simply “deferring” (Maynard 2010) the formulation of a proposal (as in pre-proposals accounting for proposals in progress (Houtkoop-Stenstra 1990)). In Scollon & Scollon’s terms<sup>14</sup>, one might say that the professional’s eliciting question suggested a “deductive” (or “topic first”) pattern of talking solutions while the client’s “non-conforming” (Raymond 2003) alluding manner suggested an “inductive” (or “topic-delayed”) pattern (Scollon and Scollon 2001). The analysis suggested that the client did not have sufficient knowledge about what to expect regarding education opportunities. Through the alluding manner, calling for co-participation in terms of unpacking the proposal, the client avoided to have the full responsibility for making an uncertain proposal. Possibly, the scene can be understood as what Goffman called “the avoidance process” (Goffman 1967b: 15). But instead of finding an excuse for not coming,



suddenly leave, or try to change the topic (Goffman 1967b: 16) the client subtly designed his complying move in an alluding manner. Thus, real-life interaction or “the intricacies of everyday discourse” (Bergmann 1998: 286) have a complexity that is hard to invent.

The practice of giving an account when performing dispreferred actions conveyed participants who oriented to their own actions as (possibly) problematic, either to remedy past events or to avoid a future “incident”. They thus represent empirical instances of the interactional production of moral adequacy or everyday morality (Bergmann 1998). In the following we will resume the discussion from Section 3.4 as the findings of this dissertation have given reason to question whether the conversation analytic framework of CA is able to identify and appreciate the messy logic that is at work in clients’ accounting practices.

### **6.3.2 Acknowledging the self-defensive orientation of accounts**

The dissertation has contributed to acknowledge the more self-defensive dimensions of accounting practices, which is somewhat unusual within conversation analytic research. As treated in Section 3.4, CA has tended to focus on the affiliating functions of accounts, as devices for producing agreement (Firth 1995), and not least for preserving social solidarity across dispreferred actions (Heritage 1984b). Regarding the latter, Heritage’s seminal piece on accounts claims that “the pressures are *consistently* [my cursiv] towards other-attentiveness and towards the maintenance of face, of social relationships and of social solidarity”(Heritage 1988: 138). But is this really so? The findings of this dissertation suggest that, at least sometimes, there might be a pressure towards self-attentiveness as well.

Especially in article II and in article III clients produced appropriate accounts for not making or complying with (alternative) suggestions. Rather than merely preserving social solidarity the analysis suggests that the accounting elements of their answer made it possible to display moral adequacy and thus pass as good-enough clients (even though not complying with the counsellor’s actions). In Goffman’s vocabulary one could say that the clients’ accountings also had a defending orientation, maintaining the clients’ moral selves while performing dispreferred actions.

However, interpretations suggesting defence on the speaker’s part are somewhat controversial within the CA research tradition. In Drew’s paper *Complaints about transgressions and misconduct* the implicit and unstated character of “defensive self-descriptions” (Jefferson 1985) is deemed a serious analytical problem:

There seems to be no explicit recognition by either of the participants that these moral issues are present in the talk or that the speaker's detailing is offered by way of a defense. This raises a methodological question, namely, that if the moral work that we can see being done in such instances of defensive detailing and does not come to the interactional surface of the talk between the participants, how can we (as analysts) make a case for that being the work of such detailing? (Drew 1998: 302)

Does this mean that unless speakers explicitly claim that their conduct was appropriate indeed, it is hard to argue for the very existence of phenomena such as self-defensive talk? But since speakers much of the time actually proceed in an implicit manner, it should hardly be a surprise that self-defending talk proceeds in this way. When rejecting an invitation with an account, appropriate behaviour is usually only implied in the account, rather than openly stated. (In either case something is *de facto* uttered and hence has become visible at the interactional surface.) The methodological problem is perhaps not so much the "implicitness" of the moral message itself as much as the lack of open recognition from co-participants, also called "validation through next turn" (Peräkylä 2004). But if an action (A) is projecting another action (B) and the latter is not coming forth, does this mean that action A was not a social intelligible action in the first place because it was not "confirmed" by the second speaker?

Another tack is to say that action A, in terms of being produced, is part of the interactional surface as well as the missing uptake, and analysts should do their best try to make sense of these actions (despite of a missing overt intersubjective structure). In article II and article III the self-defending elements of the clients' accounts are not really commented by the counsellor, other than in a minimal sense. Should an analyst be allowed to read between the lines and somehow try to make sense of it (withholding, ignoring, disagreement), or do we have to throw in the towel and just forget about it? Taken too far, the empiricism inherent in the principle of "validation through next turn" will suggest much talk to be "unanalysable" and thereby conceal the true level of non-cooperation in social interaction. This would be a pity as the methodology of CA has cast itself to be a rigorous methodology able to make sense of "any data" (Sacks 1984: 27) or "whatever humans do" (Sacks 1984: 22), rather than any particular behaviour.

Instead of treating dispreferred actions as merely institutionalized conduct, one could, when necessary, allow more pragmatic interpretations and make assumptions about the participants' (and the analyst's) know-how about potential consequences. (This means including actions which might come forth into the hermeneutic circle, thus looking beyond what actually did take place). Commenting on the practice of giving an account in dispreferred responses

Buttny suggests that speakers might be seen as actively orienting to *possible* blameworthiness:

For example, in response to an invitation, one may do declining the invitation by offering accounts or constraints (...) In these sequential environments accounts do not work as responses to blames or questions, but rather preclude their occurrence (Buttny 1993: 61).

In this sense the account functions to pre-empt blames that might be put forward in the future (if not made or still may be if not made convincingly). For instance, in the data of article II a possibly blame might have been that the clients do not want to or have not (sufficiently) cared to think over what could be an appropriate plan. A practical solution is then in Heritage terms “to produce their own accounts for non-compliance in order to forestall the negative conclusions which might otherwise be drawn”(Heritage 1988: 140). (In this line Heritage seems to presume a situation with an ontological actor of some sort who actually cares about his own face. If not, “negative conclusions” would hardly be a problem).

Compared to Goffman’s concern with identity, CA has rightly been cherished for “de-centering morality” (Bergmann 1998: 286), thus starting from interaction rather than social psychology. The findings of this dissertation nevertheless suggest that the logic of invoking accounts might be more complex than what has been suggested in CA research, focusing on other-attentiveness (Heritage 1984b; Heritage 1988), possibly at the expense of identifying more self-attentive functions. A broadening of the logic of accounting would actually be in line with other kind of CA oriented research that has already documented that there is a shared culture for maintaining the speaker’s own face. For instance, self-deprecating assessments do not project agreement like ordinary assessments do (Pomerantz 1984a). That would of course harm the speaker’s face and, thus there is a preference for disagreeing with self-deprecations. There is also suggested to be a preference for disagreement in responses to impolite actions (Bousfield 2007), and in disputes certain assertions are expected to be met with counter-assertions (Coulter 1990) (You are lazy!/I am not!).

Maintenance of the speaker’s face is certainly not always the answer to the question “Why that, now?” as Goffman’s universal rule of self-respect (Goffman 1967b) seems to suggest. But when they do occur, self-defending moves represent an outer empirical affair that can be studied in detail. Thus, to study them is not to suggest a leap into psychology. What needs to be revised, is the theoretical assumption in CA that speakers merely orient to their co-participants in designing actions and turns of talk. As mentioned, “recipient design” was in Section 3.2 defined as “a multitude of respects in which the talk by a party in a conversation

is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the coparticipants” (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974:43). It is here suggested that parts of this definition should be reformulated so that the speaker’s orientation to himself can be an interpretational option as well: “display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular participants who are present”. With this open, decentred definition, the understanding of recipient design would not be theoretically biased in any way, and whose face or moral self that is at stake (if any) can then be treated as a strictly empirical question.

## 7. Conclusion

### 7.1 A broader understanding of clienthood and dynamics

The aim of this dissertation has been to explore and understand clients' accounting practices within the setting of vocational rehabilitation. In contrast to ethnographic research, relying on second order data such as interviews, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis seek to explicate members' coordinated production of action and understanding "in flight" (Garfinkel 1984[1967]). This empirical approach challenges in its own way a view of identities as "frozen" (Healy 1999: 65) as expressed in theoretical labels of clients as "processed" or "governed", which more or less conceal clients' member's competences within welfare encounters. Hopefully, the studies in this dissertation have taught us that constructing people or treating them as the institutions "raw-material" (Prottas 1979: 3) is not as easy as it sounds.

Certainly, this is not to suggest that the image of client-professional encounters, as "orchestrated" (Dingwall 1980) by the professional part, is history. Questions are important in this setting, for eliciting plans and for examining suggestions (what Zimmerman called "testing"). Professionals' use of eliciting questions have not been as much studied as the latter, and this dissertation has provided an empirical account of *how* clients are responsabilized (Clarke 2005) to find their own solutions (article I and II). Hence, the findings of this study document the often "hybrid" (Roberts and Sarangi 1999a) character of the activities taking place within welfare-encounters, involving both a more Foucaultian self-technology (solution-eliciting questions) as well as a traditional bureaucratic activity type (investigative questions). Nevertheless, this study adds to a growing body of research suggesting that many clients are far from unaware or innocent about what language games they are taking part in, and clients' accounting practices are an excellent resource for analysing clients' own "comments" or "stance" to institutional tasks and procedures.

Through detailed analysis of clients' reporting, accounting and arguing, the study has contributed to document a high level of dynamics in this kind of institutional encounter. Thus, clients' accounting practices should be regarded as influential (of some sort) as they contribute to re-direct the professionals' activities as well as the realities produced in and through them (content of services). Viewing the meeting talk as a stream of minor decisions, one might say that the client, when not (really) orienting to the particular issues introduced by the counsellor, is exerting power in a nondecision-sense (Lukes 2005). According to Stevanovic, joint decisions are assumed to have the following three characteristics: 1)

establishes access to the content of the proposal, 2) express agreement, and, 3) display commitment to future action (Stevanovic 2012: 781). In this study the clients' evading (article III) or dismissive (article IV) orientation prevents the very first step of establishing a joint focus on the particular issue which the counsellor introduces. Thus, clients, just like politicians and people in general, sometimes do something else than simply "answer the question".

The production and reproduction of institutional realities is then a situated co-production, where the client's contribution to the local definition of the situation indeed matters. Clients' accomplishments are in this respect interpreted as stemming from "everyday-life capabilities" (Rostila 2001: 257) to produce misaligning accounts rather than a very specialized institutional know-how, though members' accountings need to follow the rules, or the "vocabulary of motive" (Mills 1940), appropriate for the setting. No doubt then, there is a rich potential for clients to negotiate different aspects of the interaction in welfare encounters, which is certainly not exhausted with this dissertation, and more research is needed to learn more about these practices as well as identifying new ones.

## **7.2 Lessons for human service practitioners?**

Although the interest in members' methods in this project is primarily descriptive, this kind of research may also offer an opportunity for practitioners to learn - not only about the practicalities of clienthood, but to learn about their own discursive practices as well. The data collection in this project took place in the transition between old and new methodologies for NAV's follow-up services, and the standardized tools for assessing a person's workability had at this moment not been implemented. The findings of this study nevertheless touch on some issues in professional-client encounters that possibly might become even more actualized when the counsellor is supposed to attend to a standardized profiling tool.

As treated in Section 2, the "actor model" (Tøssebro 1999) in Aetat in the 90s placed the responsibility for proposing action plans mainly on the client, and it was a widespread practice in Aetat that clients in this process should put some options down on paper (Møller, Flermoen, and Løyland 2003: 64). The current regime is different from this creative work in being informed by evidence thinking, stemming from the field of medicine (via the field of social work). In line with this, different aspects of the client's life situation (including the client's wishes) are systematically mapped in cooperation with the client, before a joint decision is taken. However, both "methodologies" seem to be mixed up with the NPM

inspired thinking saying that it is «the user who is sitting with the solution” (Hernes, Heum, Haavorsen, and Saglie 2010: 202). But while the actor model prescribed the client to put forward her wish (as the outcome of a creative internal process?) the current workability assessment frames it as a process of (quasi) scientific investigation, something that will be possible to come to terms with when the necessary facts are put on the table.

The problem with viewing the client as a source of facts within the current evidence-based approach, is that information is primarily treated as an essence on its own rather than being something that is jointly constituted in talk on a social turn-by-turn basis (for example, proposals be conceived ideas inside the client, rather than something that is co-produced in talk). A larger understanding of information as being constituted in situ through co-constructed actions might make practitioners more aware of their own manners or *how* they ask question and not least *how* the clients react to them. This would make professionals more attentive to what Goffman called “tact” or the social skills of face-work:

If a person is to employ his repertoire of face-saving practices, obviously he must first become aware of the interpretations that others may have placed upon his acts and the interpretations that he ought perhaps to place upon theirs. In other words, he must exercise perceptiveness” (Goffman 1967b: 13).

The findings of this project suggest that professionals should be aware that questions might be troublesome to clients’ social faces (Goffman 1967b). The professional’s eliciting questions treated in article I and II are helpful in the sense that clients do not need to introduce the topic of action-planning themselves, which might be face-threatening as well (see Rostila 2001: 253). The findings nevertheless suggest that the direct design of these questions might be challenging, especially for clients who do not have much to report. This is supported by earlier ethnographic research from the field reporting that some clients experienced the process of making an action plan as very demanding (Møller, Flermoen, and Løyland 2003: 64). Thus, NAV’s core-value of being clear<sup>15</sup> might in encounters get in opposition to tact and social consideration. A “to the point” way of proceeding might seem more professional, but if the purpose is to offer low-threshold services, where clients without plans can “think aloud” in a trusting environment, a more relaxed style is perhaps better?

Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that clients’ accounting practices very much rely on “the language of hint” (Goffman 1967b: 30) and indexical meanings, where the argumentative and/or moral point must be inferred by the counsellor. NAV counsellors who follow a standardized interview scheme may be searching for “definite meanings”, but in this

process they nevertheless utilize their mundane competence as cooperative conversationalists. It is possible to imagine that this willingness to unpack indexed meanings in a mundane fashion may be affected by the numbers of questions to be asked as well as other aspects of the working conditions in NAV. Actually, a report on work capability assessments suggests that NAV counsellors sometimes do not even take the time to speak with clients before making a decision. On this one counsellor says: «There are quite a few points you should go through. Those who introduced it must understand that it takes a lot of resources» (PROBA 2011: 101).

Hence, it is important to think about NAV's goal of individualized services in terms of form, and not only in terms of content (information/evidence, and the services following from them). It is here believed that doing conversation analysis, "even in the absence of consistent and rigorous application" (Montigny 2007: 102), as well as reading pieces from the research field, can help professionals and students to develop their skills of perceptiveness. In this way conversation analysis can provide a concrete and realistic means for practitioners to discuss and reflect upon the issue of "good practice".



## Summary

*Defensive accountings - An ethnomethodological study of clients' resistance practices in vocational rehabilitation encounters*

The objective of the labour market programme Vocational Rehabilitation was to help clients with health problems to get (back to) work. While policy documents idealize client as “active” and “participating” this doctoral dissertation investigates in an empirical fashion how this actually comes about in follow-up meetings in NAV-offices (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration). By utilizing the tools of ethnomethodological conversation analysis, this study addresses how clients contribute in the negotiation of action plans, with a special focus on clients' resistance practices. The studies examine how mundane accounting practices can be an interactional resource to manage various interactional dilemmas associated with being a client of vocational rehabilitation. How do clients comply with the institutional request to formulate solutions in a contingent environment? How do clients manage issues of accountability within solution eliciting sequences? And not least, what interactional resources do clients use to resist the counsellor's investigations?

## Data and analysis

The study is based on 15 audio recorded encounters between clients of vocational rehabilitation and their counsellors. This involved 8 different NAV-offices, located in large or medium sized cities/towns in Norway. The counsellors made arrangements with clients and recorded the encounter themselves after signing a written consent form. The material was transcribed according to the standards of conversation analysis, by using a modified version of a transcription system, originally developed by Gail Jefferson. Research issues were not formulated in advance, but the analysis set off to focus upon events of proposal-making and accounting where the parties were not all aligned.

## Findings

The dissertation contains four empirical studies:

- V. *Accepted and resisted: the client's responsibility for making proposals in activation encounters* (Janne Solberg, published in *Text & Talk*, vol. 31, 731-752, 2011)
- VI. *Activation Encounters: Dilemmas of Accountability in Constructing Clients as 'Knowledgeable'* (Janne Solberg, published in *Qualitative Social Work*, vol 10, 381-398, 2011).

- VII. *Making sense of accounting practices: Clients' reports of abandoned proposals in Norwegian activation encounters* (Janne Solberg, in review).
- VIII. *Negotiations in professional-client encounters: Building cases through second-hand accounts* (Janne Solberg, accepted on 12 December 2013 for publication in *Pragmatics & Society*).

The findings of the studies suggest that clients' accounting practices represent cultural resources for performing a variety of resisting actions - defending the client's case and/or face as an accountable client.

First: Despite of the professional's orchestrating role in the conversation, the client still has opportunities to affect the terms of talking. As shown in the first article of this dissertation the professional's solution-eliciting question might be re-structured through the client's accountings, complying with projected speaker roles, though in a "non-conforming" (Raymond 2003) manner. The "top-down" (Drew and Heritage 1992: 23) approach, embedded in the professional's eliciting question, was here resisted and transformed through the client's "proposal-implicating tellings", alluding to rather than formulating a proposal. This manner represented a "bottom-up" pattern and a more distributed responsibility for talking a contingent proposal into being, and possibly this was less challenging to the client's face than a straightforward proposal would be.

Second: Although clients are more or less pushed to participate, for instance to formulate plans, they can invoke appropriate accounts to excuse or justify that a preferred answer is not coming. Solution-eliciting questions often have a direct and retrospective question-design which frames clients as knowledgeable in terms of possible solutions, but not all clients have plans to report. This suggests that even client facilitating questions have an implicit moral backside, which may be potentially face-threatening to clients without ready plans. But, as shown in article II, clients are very much able to invoke accounting elements, excusing or justifying (Scott and Lyman 1968) that a proposal/idea was not produced as requested. Accounting elements are thus mundane resources for realizing desirable conversational and moral identities in this kind of encounter.

Third: Clients often have plans to suggest, and to manage the counsellor's investigations, various resistance practices might be invoked to defend the client's case. In article III the client evades the counsellor's agenda of considering alternative plans through reporting an abandoned proposal, rather than discussing the issue in a present tense. This evasive move is

realized by means of a diplomatic “agreement-preface” organization, preserving social solidarity and the participants’ faces in an environment of potential misalignment. A more open disagreeing orientation is described in article IV where the account of a non-present third person, providing a better grasp on the matter at hand, was invoked to fend off potentially troublesome issues introduced by the professional part. (By introducing a relevancy tacitly assumed to be more important to consider). In each way the studies demonstrate ways for clients to be influential, exerting power in a nondecision-sense (Lukes 2005) by not (really) orienting to the particular issues introduced by the counsellor.

The findings suggest that clients’ mundane, interactional competence should be taken much seriously in sociological research on professional-client encounters. Albeit the counsellor has a recognizable role as “orchestrator” (Dingwall 1980), the client has a (mundane) interactional capacity for influencing both how the encounter proceeds and, not least, what obligations that eventually are put into the client’s action plan. The client’s competence in this respect covers both conversational and situated social identities (Zimmerman 1998), which presumes know-how in managing conversational partners as well as particular accountability frameworks (Stokes and Hewitt 1976). Clients and professionals of vocational rehabilitation are thus seldom in “worlds apart” (Robinson 1978), but from time to time they might have different interactional projects.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example extract 4 in article II, which provides an empirical and interactional account of the psychological assumption that some (female) clients are "people-pleasers" (Pehrson, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> While working on this article I recalled a NAV-scene where a colleague of mine was complaining to me about a client who had claimed services by referring to others who had been granted these services. According to a professional line of thinking each case is unique, which means that what goes for one person, does not necessarily work for another.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes this is outlined as the "black hole of democracy" (Eriksen 2001; Rothstein 1994: 98f)

<sup>4</sup> In one instance the client had rehabilitation money, but he would some time ahead apply for vocational rehabilitation money. Both kinds were contemporary benefits, but rehabilitation money was given during medical treatment.

<sup>5</sup> Folketrygdloven might be compared to The National Insurance Act.

<sup>6</sup> "En sterk motivasjon kan utvilsomt oppveie for svake helsemessige forutsetninger" (Rundskriv om yrkesrettet atfering pkt. 6.1, siste avsnitt)

<sup>7</sup> "...the whole, consisting of language and the activities into which it is woven" or even "a form of life".

<sup>8</sup> Also Anita Pomerantz seems to acknowledge the face issues involved in dispreferred actions, but she does not adopt Goffman's face vocabulary like Heritage does: "...across different situations, conversants orient to

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agreeing with one another as comfortable, supportive, reinforcing, perhaps as being sociable and as showing that they are like-minded. (...) Likewise, across a variety of situations conversants orient to their disagreeing with one another as uncomfortable, unpleasant, difficult, risking threat, insult, or offense” (Pomerantz 1984a: 77).

<sup>9</sup> When conversation analysts once in a while treat such phenomena, for instance the phenomenon of “defensive detailing” in two mundane telephone calls (Drew 1998), no reference is made to the accounting literature or Goffman’s face-work theory.

<sup>10</sup> Health problems related to neck/back was the most common health problem in this corpus, followed by psychological dysfunction, which is in line with the Norwegian population at large. Most clients had work experience of some length, and half of the group was skilled workers or had higher education at bachelor-level. Information about education is though inaccurate as they rely on self-rapports (questionnaire), in some cases missing, but it seems to match statistics from 2006-2007 pretty well (Kristoffersen 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Robert K. Yin defines internal validity as “seeking to establish a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships” (2009:40).

<sup>12</sup> Cawell and Eskelinen (2012: 21) has suggested to graduate the concept of exit, it might involve to move to a different municipality, walking out or being absent from meetings, activation or assessment measures, or to apply for Early Retirement Pension.

<sup>13</sup> Bruner defines «folk psychology» as «a set of more or less connected, more or less normative descriptions about how human beings “tick”, what our own and other minds are like, what one can expect situated action to be like, what are possible modes of life, how one commits oneself to them, and so on” (Bruner 1990: 35).

<sup>14</sup> This distinction of topic-first and topic-delayed might be compared to Paul Drew and John Heritage’s conception of interaction as «top-down» or «bottom-up» in *Talk at Work* (1992: 23).

<sup>15</sup> Tydelig – til stede – løsningsdyktig (<http://www.nav.no/Om+NAV/NAV>)



**Accepted and resisted: the client's responsibility for making proposals in  
activation encounters**

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# Accepted and resisted: the client's responsibility for making proposals in activation encounters

JANNE SOLBERG

## *Abstract*

*In line with Norwegian welfare policies, clients in vocational rehabilitation encounters are responsabilized to take an active part in the planning of measures that will qualify them for suitable work. In situ, among other things, this is actualized by the counselor's open what-question, eliciting the client to propose appropriate actions. The article analyzes two cases where a long-term education is proposed in the answer-slot, which, due to its contingent acceptability, is a very ambiguous interactional enterprise. The analysis demonstrates by means of ethnomethodological conversation analysis how clients might proceed when they deal with the eliciting question. In the first case the client complies with the allocated responsibility of reporting plans|ideas and formulates a proposal easily heard as an answer to the request. The second instance demonstrates a less aligned approach where the client by "proposal-implying tellings" takes steps to transform proposal making into a more open-ended activity. It is argued that the second approach, relying on the counselor's active co-participation, represents a more distributed responsibility, and to the client, a less troublesome way for introducing and discussing a contingent proposal.*

*Keywords:* activation encounters; ethnomethodology; responsabilization; eliciting questions; proposal making.

## **1. Introduction: investigating "responsibilization" empirically**

A "personal service model" (Sultana and Watts 2006) is widespread in activation settings and clients of vocational rehabilitation are regularly requested to propose measures qualifying them for employment in the ordinary labor market.<sup>1</sup> It has been argued that in the ethos of what OECD has called the "active society," unemployed persons are defined as "active subjects," rather than as passive receivers of benefits (Dean 1995), with a personal responsibility for

becoming a “hard working” individual (Clarke 2005: 451). Foucauldian-oriented scholars regard activation encounters as a site of governance, sustaining active clients who are capable of governing themselves (Cruikshank 1999), this being most efficient to society. The problem is that this kind of research does not say very much about what it takes *in situ* to participate, that is, how institutional tasks are actually brought about by the members themselves in what within ethnomethodology is called “concerted actions” (Garfinkel 1967: 31). This would suggest turning to the participants’ own orientation to institutional identities, made manifest in the details of the talk (Drew and Sorjonen 1997). However, within the tradition of applied conversation analysis (CA), “processes of responsabilization” (Clarke 2005) where the client provides a solution as requested (proposal eliciting question—proposal making) has not been investigated.

The extensive body of research on counseling interaction has instead developed around the concept of “advice,” especially how professionals give advice to clients (Heritage and Sefi 1992; Kjærbeck 2003; Silverman 1997; Tarber 2003; Vehviläinen 1999), sometimes in response to the client’s request for advice (Vehviläinen 2009). Inquiries play an important role in terms of establishing a stepwise entry that takes the client’s perspective into account before the advice is given (Heritage and Sefi 1992; Silverman 1997; Vehviläinen 2001), first described in a medical context as “perspective display series” (Maynard 1992). In a recent research project on a children’s helpline, “advice-relevant interrogatives” are described, not as preparing steps, but as a means on its own for offering suggestions (“Could you talk to Gary about your concerns?”) (Butler et al. 2010: 273). This is similar to what Suoninen and Jokinen (2005) call “persuasive questions” within social work. Another finding from the children’s helpline project is the professionals’ use of “script proposals,” that is, packaging advice as something the client might say at future occasions to help the person to solve a problem (Emmison et al. 2011).

This research tradition tends to put the client in the role of the advice-receiver and the professional as the advice-giver. It is the counselor who eventually brings about a solution or a timely suggestive question to the client’s problems and this notion of “advice” does make sense when it is the counselor who makes suggestions. But, in the setting of vocational rehabilitation, which is the focus of the present study, it is often the client, and not the counselor, who is *first* made accountable to present a solution and when the client has a proposal, the professional’s subsequent response is much better understood as a “decision” or a “stance” projecting one, rather than an advice suggesting “a course of future action” (Heritage and Sefi 1992: 368). Unfortunately, CA research does not seem to have something to say on the difference of “advice as future action” and “advice as stance/decision,” but treating eliciting sequences only as a “stepwise entry” for the professional’s subsequent advice leads to

obscuring the client's contribution in institutional decision making.<sup>2</sup> Hence, since the notions advice giving/seeking assume that the "solution creating move" belongs to the professional role, this paper will instead analyze action planning in terms of proposal making.

It is worth noting that there is a small gap between the Foucauldian account of clients as "responsibilized citizens" (Clarke 2005) socialized to find their own solution and interactional counseling research, which often suggests that solutions are due to professionals' verbal activities.<sup>3</sup> Without denying the importance of advice giving it is here believed that the Foucauldian account of "responsibilized citizens" should be taken up and studied as an empirical phenomenon, too. However, to claim that citizens are "the product of processes of 'responsibilization'" (2005: 451) is to ignore the participants' local efforts in realizing client-professional encounters. Instead, the tools of ethnomethodological conversation analysis adopted in this paper allow us to learn about "responsibilization" in activation encounters in detail, as a real-time phenomenon. To comply with the professional's eliciting question does not mean "passive responding," but to introduce contingent issues for a professional party, which should be considered as a sensitive and indeed skilled, interactional achievement—even for the so-called "appropriate client" (Taylor and White 2000). Proposals not voiced cannot be decided upon and proposal making might therefore be a "fateful moment" for clients with wishes of their own and even the enactment of a ready plan "must be adapted in its delivery to its occasion" (Schegloff 1982: 73).

The issue to be explored in this paper is how clients comply with counselors' questions, eliciting clients' own proposals for work-qualifying measures. In contrast to the specific inquiring practices described in counseling interaction, the eliciting questions adopted in this setting are often very open; they assume the client to be "knowledgeable" of possible issues without providing much help in the issues concerned. In this paper, clients' approaches to fulfilling solution-eliciting questions will be demonstrated in two cases, displaying the participants' inherent understandings of the interaction, of themselves, and of the dilemmas of the setting. The analysis suggests that even for the client with plans to report, proposal making might be an ambiguous enterprise as clients sometimes seek more co-participation and support in talking a contingent proposal into being than the terms of the eliciting question suggest. Thus, in spite of the impact of "responsibilizing regimes," clients might resist them and take steps to transform their course.

### 1.1. *Setting*

"The work line" (St.melding nr. 39 1991/1992) in Norwegian welfare policy stresses that citizens have both a right and a duty to work or to prepare for

regular work. The study is based on data from vocational rehabilitation encounters at NAV offices,<sup>4</sup> which is an active labor market program for clients with health problems. At the moment of recording, the clients received temporary benefits where future employment is the objective. The names of the benefit system have recently been changed, but to be eligible for “vocational rehabilitation money,” as it was called at the moment of recording, the client’s earning ability must be permanently reduced due to illness or damage. Persons within this client category are usually deemed eligible and are also committed to take part in some sort of action (often education, training for work or shorter courses), aimed at qualifying them for getting a “suitable” occupation (Folketrygdloven §10-6).

To realize the objective of the work line, an important task of these institutional meetings is to map needs and create an individual rehabilitation plan, preparing the client for a “suitable” occupation. NAV offices offer information and counseling, mapping of interests, and in a few cases also more specialized services of occupational psychology (information provided at NAV’s net site). The value of user’s participation and individually adapted services has lately been enforced, though in this field of vocational rehabilitation the ideal of the client’s responsibility in making individual plans is not new at all. In the middle of the 1990s, similar ideas were presented as “the actor model” (Tøssebro 1999). The intent of this model was to replace the traditional medical model of helping, in which the client had a passive role. “The actor model” made the client responsible for proposing a plan, whereas the professional’s role was limited to giving information and formally deciding upon plans. However, other elements of this institutional framework create difficulties or dilemmas that both professionals and clients need to take into account in the local management of action planning.

A dilemma which has been given much attention since the classical books of Lipsky (1980) and Prottas (1979) is known as the dilemma between “autonomy versus control” (Hjørne et al. 2010: 304). The client is free to propose measures, but due to the legislation actions need to be approved by NAV as “appropriate” and “necessary” (Folketrygdloven §10-6). Many elements, such as the client’s qualification and present vocational opportunities, should be taken into account and if a counselor thinks a client will get a job with the qualifications she already has, the client’s plan on, say, an education might be rejected for not being “necessary.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, clients are expected to be active and to make proposals, but there is still an inherent ambiguity in the institutional frameworks regarding the exact scope of the client’s right to propose, relative to the professional’s authority to decide upon “appropriate” or “necessary” action. Counselors need to balance this dual role of being both a *facilitator* (Vehviläinen 2001) and a *gatekeeper*, and this dilemmatic “hybridity” (Roberts and Sarangi 1999) of talk is clearly more present when long-term measures, such as education, are in

question. The ambition of this paper is to demonstrate that also clients seeking “expensive” actions might orient to the underlying resource aspect of their proposal—which can be seen in that clients proceed rather “cautiously.”

## 1.2. *Data*

The data for the study consist of 15 taped conversations involving 9 counselors (6 women and 3 men) in different NAV offices and 14 clients (7 men and 7 women, one pair was recorded twice). Practically speaking, the counselors themselves arranged the audio recordings, equipped with written information about the research project and consent forms. The meetings took place as part of the routine, and either the parties had not met before or there had been a few previous meetings. In this context there is no schedule for the process of making an individual rehabilitation plan. According to counselors who have been involved in this study, it is not unusual that the first meeting is used for mapping circumstances/interests, and that there are a couple of meetings, or more, before a plan is settled. In the encounter of Extract (2), the counselor followed an interview scheme in the start of the meeting, making a profile of the client’s ability to work, but the action-planning sequence studied here appeared to be evolving within talk.

An overall sequential organization of these encounters might be suggested at follows: eliciting question/proposal—accounting—decision/conclusion. The focus of this paper is on the first phase and in the data corpus nine clients had concrete plans,<sup>6</sup> which often involved getting an education or at least seeking a clearly defined occupation. In the two instances focused on in the analysis, the clients had education plans that were carefully prepared before the meeting since they had checked out different education programs, etc. As paying for the education themselves was hardly an option, much was at stake for these clients, considered as pursued reflexive projects of life planning (Giddens 1991). The client’s proposal is very consequential, turning the interaction into another phase, which could be called accounting/discussion. The counselor often initiates insert sequences or even an “interrogative series” (Whalen and Zimmerman 1990), ensuring that the proposal and the eventual decision turn out “visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes” (Garfinkel 1967). In seven of the nine cases the client’s proposal was either accepted at the meeting or was projected to be so, which suggests that the client’s proposal often is of much strategic importance for the overall outcome in this setting.

## 2. **Research issues**

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how clients practically proceed in fulfilling the professional’s solution-eliciting questions implementing policy

discourses of the “active client” described earlier. In Danish activation research a solution-eliciting scene is commented upon in the following way: “here the client is put to the test, has she something to offer?” (Eskelinen et al. 2008: 69). The “demand-quality” of the professional’s eliciting question has within this project been accounted for in another publication. Eliciting questions tend to “recipient design” (Sacks et al. 1974) clients as knowledgeable in terms of providing solutions and, according to conversational preference rules, they make delivery of a proposal/idea a relevant next action.

The often direct design of these questions does not display any orientation to the dilemma of “autonomy versus control” associated with the counselor’s ultimate right to decide upon the client’s proposal. But following existing research on turn-design, an orientation to this dilemma might nevertheless be found in the clients’ ways of packaging their proposals in the answer-slot, which displays how contingencies of the setting are understood and managed in the talk as it happens (Curl and Drew 2008). Although proposal making implies doing the preferred action, this might be accomplished in a way that displays the matter as “negotiable matter” (Asmuß 2007), in contrast to things one is entitled to have. On the client’s part, this presumes some knowledge of the institutional framework, whether the proposal at hand is likely to be accepted or not as well as the ability to consider what Mead calls the imagined reactions of others (the counselor).

Thus making proposals, especially long-term education, as requested might be a rather dilemmatic enterprise. If clients do not voice their proposal, some other (to them less attractive) option will instead be provided by the counselor as “something has to happen” in this institutional context—and hence they will miss their chance. On the other hand, if the client voices the proposal, she puts herself in a vulnerable argumentative first position that is easily challenged by the counselor’s evaluation (Hutchby 1996; Vehviläinen 1999), or in a worse-case scenario, results in rejection. These are not only dispreferred actions in a “mechanical” normative sense, as they easily can turn into what Goffman (1967) calls “incidents” capable of destroying the client’s positive face. A solution to this dilemma is possibly pursued by an alternative course of action described in Extract (2) as “proposal-implicating tellings.” Although the acts of implicating a proposal through personal tellings are not very aligned or “type-conforming” (Raymond 2003) to the eliciting question, they might be regarded as an attempt at establishing new relevancies where the counselor’s participation and support is pursued to escape a vulnerable position as proposal maker.

In what follows it will be argued that the client’s readiness to align or conform to the actions implied by the eliciting question is best understood by taking the contingency and accountability aspects of proposal making into account. The more specific research objectives are as follows:

- To provide more evidence of how responsibility for making “appropriate and necessary” measures is constituted and distributed *in situ* by professionals’ eliciting questions. But primarily:
- To describe how vocational rehabilitation clients in practice comply with the institutional request for formulating “appropriate and necessary” proposals
- To analyze how clients in packaging their proposal understand and align to the actions and speaker roles suggested by the eliciting question
- To make sense of nonalignment with the eliciting question in terms of managing particular contingencies

### 3. Analysis

By comparing the patterns in two single cases, different ways for how clients go along in complying with the counselor’s request for proposals will be outlined in this section. As a first part of “the adjacency pair” structure (Schegloff and Sacks 1973), the eliciting question embodies some constraint to what should happen in the answer slot. As specified by Raymond (2003), questions also make relevant certain types of answers. This section demonstrates that although both clients are doing actions connected to the preferred activity (making proposals), their actions might nevertheless more or less align to the eliciting question. In this analysis a “type-conforming” approach, where the client fulfills the request for a proposal in a manner that evidently conforms to the request, will be demonstrated first to make a contrastive case to the analysis in the next section, exploring a less usual form. But even the client’s “proposal-implicating tellings” might be a rare empirical phenomenon due to CA research suggesting that people largely tend to comply with the question–answer format (Raymond 2003; Silverman 1997). It will be argued that this deviating instance is not an accidental event which just happened not to come out right. Thus, the analytic focus of this section is mainly to make sense of the second case due to the contingencies of this setting, but to notice what is special about it, a typical case will be demonstrated first.

#### 3.1. *A conforming response: making a proposal*

A proposal is both a response, linked to the prior talk, as well as an initiating, context-renewing action (Heritage 1984). In this setting of activation, institutional “responsibilization” is enacted, among other things, by the counselor’s eliciting question, which selects the client as next speaker (Sacks et al. 1974)

and sets up a normative expectation that a proposal/idea should be provided as the preferred next action from the client. A proposal is then “talked into being” by the client, formulating a proposal in the answer slot as has been suggested by the counselor’s eliciting question. In our data corpus the counselors’ eliciting question typically comes about as in “What have you thought about?”. A type-conforming preferred answer to this question would then align to the “what-interrogative” (Raymond 2003: 944) which here is made relevant and thus report on some idea or plan in the answer-slot (“I have thought about X”). The timing of such questions depends on the prior interaction. In first-time meetings there will often be longer sequences of mapping before the action-topic is opened. If parties have met before, the counselor will raise the question as the first topic after the greeting, often by connecting to their prior meeting.

We will look at an instance where a proposal is made quite early in the conversation. Note that the institutional category “suitable work”, adopted by the counselor in line 37, had been introduced by the client as he was recounting information from a NAV course recently attended (not shown):

- (1) (ID 9, CL = male client, CO = female counselor)<sup>7</sup>
- 23 CO: e.hm did you feel that you received information about what initiatives there are for rehabilitation, what possibilities there are and ((the client’s recounting of information omitted))
- 37 CO: and suitable work for you, (0.2) what’s that?
- 38 CL: Hard to say, [e::hm.
- 39 CO: [°yes°
- 40→ CL: I’ve done some thinking,
- 41 CO: °m°
- 42→ CL: =and then I (really) think about becoming a teacher,
- 43 CO: You want to become a teacher.
- 44 CL: =yes.  
((the counselor repeated reformulation omitted))
- 56 CO: mm, have you checked a bit what it takes to-

In line 37 the counselor uses the legal term, “suitable work”, mentioned by the client, as a resource for contextualizing an eliciting question. The eliciting question (“suitable work for you, what’s that”) is explicitly addressed to the client by the pronoun “you”, and the question assumes the client to be informed about what “suitable work” is to him (Heritage 1984). In putting the question in this way the counselor “instructs” (Pomerantz 1988) the client, not to talk about “vocations you dreamed about as a child,” etc., but rather to frame his answer/proposal to this specific institutional framework (“suitable work”).



Moreover, it should be noticed that the inquiry is very directly put, “what’s that?”, but the client is not as direct in his response, although “becoming a teacher” (line 42) is indeed a type-conforming (Raymond 2003) response to the counselor’s *what*-question. Even his uptake is not delayed; the formulation of the proposal appears to be a bit hedged by the utterance “hard to say” and the hesitation in the same turn. Also, starting anew he comes across as repetitive around his “thinking” so that his proposal is packaged into the back of line 42. This suggests that although delivering a proposal as requested in a type-conforming manner (Raymond 2003), the client does not fully adopt the preferred format, that is, in a quite direct manner without pauses, extensions, hedges, and so on (Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Levinson 1983; Pomerantz 1984). Recalling the counselor’s eliciting question, this was clearly contextualized to the institutional framework, “instructing” the client that not everything works (only “suitable work”). The client might then, at the moment of production, have been somewhat called out to consider his proposal as a contingent matter (Curl and Drew 2008), explaining his somewhat delayed response.

Another element that should be commented upon is found in line 43, where the counselor reformulates the verb “think about” to the stronger “want to” and this understanding is, in the next turn, confirmed by the client. To counselors, clients’ proposal-design is probably an important resource to monitor and sort out the legitimacy of a proposal, not least to assure that the client is making a genuine proposal (instead of, say, just providing the second-pair part of a question). The counselor’s reformulation possibly suggests that an education, which in this setting means a long-term (expensive) action, requires substantial commitment and motivation to be granted. To the counselor, the client’s word-selection might then index a “not sufficiently motivated mind.” On the other hand, considering what follows, the counselor gets another impression, as this client is arguing against as many as seven other counter-proposals from the counselor before the case is more or less settled in favor of the client’s initial wish. Thus, his, indeed, strong commitment to the proposal is demonstrated little by little in the unfolding negotiation, rather than in the word selection of the proposal formulation. As it is easier to back down from “thoughts” rather than “wishes,” a modest modality at the moment of delivery might be considered as a way of managing the contingency of his proposal of becoming a teacher.

To summarize, this extract demonstrates an instance of “responsibilization in action,” where the client complies with the professional’s quite direct eliciting question and accepts the responsibility by doing the preferred activity, that is, he makes a proposal in second position. Here, this is accomplished in a recognizable type-conforming manner (Raymond 2003) and there is no doubt at all what is going on in this scene: The counselor requests plans/ideas by

adopting a *what*-interrogative and the client provides the requested information and formulates a proposal (“becoming a teacher”), albeit somewhat hedged and weakly put.

### 3.2. *A non-conforming response: “proposal-implying tellings”*

The case in this section demonstrates that proposal delivery does not have to be that simple. The problem here is not that the proposal is missing; rather the focus will be on its noticeable kind of enactment. Instead of formulating a proposal, clients might initiate open-ended actions in the answer-slot which suggest a more “incrementally accomplished” (Schegloff 1982) way of talking a proposal into being. Compared to Extract (1), the client’s response to the eliciting question is not very “type conforming” (Raymond 2003). Although the client’s response is eventually understood as projecting a proposal, the client is evidently ambivalent in designing his answer as complying with the counselor’s *what*-question. Instead, the client initiates actions in the answer-slot which here are called “proposal-implying tellings.” According to Sacks (1992: 67), “there are ways of introducing a piece of information and testing out whether it will be acceptable, which don’t involve saying it.” Sacks was here talking about category membership, and in our case the client starts telling about other persons belonging to the occupational category “policemen” pursued by the client, while it is left for the counselor to discover the implications of this telling (Drew 1984: 137) in terms of projecting a proposal.

Like in Extract (1), the client in this extract is also a young man who pursues an education. He has just talked about his worries about the future (not shown). The counselor sees this as an opportunity to elicit the client’s plans (lines 465 and 467), which is delivered in a very demanding manner, with much volume on the interrogating *what*’s. The client acknowledges the addressed speaker-ship in the phrase “I’ve thought quite a lot” (line 469), but then he starts a story, joking about an interest-test (not shown). After a while the client returns to answering the eliciting question, still orienting to the question–answer format in the phrase “I’ve thought a lot” (line 496), but in spite of these projections a proposal is not coming.

(2) (ID 2, CL = male client, CO = female counselor)

465→ CO: No, have you thought

466 CL: >th[ings like that<

467→ CO: [about WHAT you can do=WHAT can you do when you are no longer an electrician, what have you thought about?

468 (0.5)

469 CL: (yes m) I’ve thought quite (a lot)  
((joke-sequence omitted))

- 496 CL: .h I've thought a lot but=e:: I just don't seem to know just what  
are possibilities or [I just don't kinda]
- 497 CO: [What is eheh no you have not made up your  
mind?
- 498 (0.5)
- 499→ CL: (Well) I mean I've thought a great deal about:t b- Because I've  
talked a lot- I know a lot of policemen.
- 500 CO: [°mm°
- 501 CL: [I've talked quite a lot with them. And tha:t's something I t- and  
that was one of the things I (0.3) when I was going to get an  
education when I was 16-17,
- 502 CO: m.
- 503 CL: then it was sort of like, either becoming a skilled worker or (it  
was)-
- 504 CO: °okay°
- 505 CL: because I have parents who did that for several years
- 506 CO: .hyes
- 507 CL: and then it's sort of been like- (0.7) .h it's been an interest to me.
- 508 CO: >hyes,<
- 509 (0.2)
- 510→ CL: e::h bu:t then (I became an electrician)
- 511 CO: then you became
- 512 CL: =(It sort of was)
- 513 CO: yes. hyes
- 514 CL: It was a bit simpler I think=it was a- a little bit because of that I  
think too.
- 515 CO: What kind of education=what is required to be a policeman?

Indeed, much is happening in this strip of talk. What is interesting is that in line 499 the client ("I've thought a great deal about b-") projects the formulation of a proposal, but this is then aborted. The client instead makes a new start, now reporting his doings (talking to and knowing "a lot of" policemen), which continues into a more extensive retrospective telling that invokes other biographical elements (dilemma of choosing training, parents). The client seems to be done after an in-breath in the middle of line 507 where the client claims that this occupation has been an interest for him, but in return the counselor again only briefly confirms (.hyes). After some hesitation, in line 510 the client delivers what is called an increment or an extension ("but then I became an electrician") where a turn continues the action of the previous turn (Schegloff 1996). Such turns do not start "new actions," but create new transition-relevant places at which the recipient can (once more) display reciprocity (Thompson et al. 2002). However, because the client is sticking to a biography-telling

frame, this increment perhaps has an element of “backing-down” from the projected proposal, more than being another go at it.

But ultimately the counselor demonstrates that she indeed has inferred between “interests then” and “interests now.” As she in line 515 makes a new inquiry about the length of the education she de facto demonstrates that she has re-contextualized the vocation category “police” from the biographical-talk frame and that she treats it as a possible option for the client. The counselor’s follow-up question in line 515 thus displays that she has understood his talk as pointing to police education. When this apparently nonrelevant biographical telling is understood as projecting a proposal, this is of course due to its sequential position—as following the counselor’s eliciting question (line 467), hearing what comes as a response. But the efficiency of the adjacency pair apparatus (Schegloff and Sacks 1973) is here also actively maintained by the client’s contribution, framing his speech to be heard as a response by recycling the counselor’s formulation, “have thought” (lines 469, 499).

To summarize, the client in this instance does not align to the eliciting question as smoothly as in case (1) where the client’s response to the *what*-question was formed as “I think about becoming an X”. Non-confirming actions very much expand the sequence (Raymond 2003: 950) and the joke sequence in this extract (not shown) creates much distance to the eliciting question. Also, the tellings with the proposal-relevant category “policemen” is packaged quite deep into the talk. Although the client by referring to what he has thought about (lines 469, 499) indeed relates to the eliciting question to report plans, he does not really explicate his plan. The sense of his talk is left for the counselor to figure out for herself from the client’s tellings about policemen he knows, dilemma of choosing an education, and his parents’ police-background as a source of his interests. Especially interesting is the increment in line 510, where the counselor is once again requested to come in. The proposal is “talked around,” but not explicated. Instead the client builds up a context that projects a proposal and makes it understandable to his co-participant, but otherwise awaiting the counselor’s initiative. This “defensive style” will now be related to managing contingencies embedded in this setting.

### 3.3. *Summary and discussion*

One could say that the conforming proposal making in Extract (1) accepts the institutional “responsibilization” of the client embedded in the eliciting question whereas the “proposal-implying” approach in Extract (2) resists this assumption and suggests a more “distributed responsibility” (Jacoby and Ochs 1995). If we place what happens in the sequences next to each other, it becomes evident that the distributed pattern of Extract (2) in sequential terms is more extensive than in Extract (1):

Extract (1)	Extract (2)
CO: Eliciting question (line 37)	CO: Eliciting question (lines 465, 467)
CL: Formulation of a proposal (lines 38, 40, 42)	(CL: Joke sequence)
CO: Confirmation (line 43)	CL: Problem-marker (line 496)
CO: New question (line 56)	CO: Erroneously repair (line 497)
	CL: Proposal-implying tellings (lines 499–514)
	CO: Minimal uptake
	CL: Increment (line 510)
	Co: New question displaying proposal uptake (515)

In Extract (1), the client conforms to the counselor's *what*-interrogative and formulates a proposal as requested in second position, albeit being somewhat hedged and modest. Compared to this path, Extract (2) embodies an alternative, more elaborated pattern. The speech of the client is indeed designed to be heard as an answer to the professional's eliciting question, but does not fully comply with it. The eliciting *what*-question projects report of a proposal/idea ("I have thought about becoming X") but police education is not being formulated as the client's present wish. The client appears to transform the established question-answer format and initiate more open-ended actions, here called "proposal-implying tellings." Although designing his speech to be heard as an answer, the client adopts a biographical story frame and talks "around the matter" by indexing bits on policemen he knows, dilemma of choosing an education, and his parents' police background. By these acts as well as increments the counselor is proffered to pick up that the client is interested in this vocation and the counselor's new question on the topic, ipso facto, displays to the client that his message has been understood.

These more "open actions" negotiate meaning on a turn-by-turn basis rather than being clearly projected (Houtkoop and Mazeland 1985); it might be seen as suggesting that talk should proceed along what could be called a joint "topic-to-be-explored format" in contrast to the counselor's "question-answer format." Whereas the sense of the client's activity as formulating a proposal in case (1) is immediately recognizable, the client's talk in case (2) is not as easily projecting the same, which makes the counselor's uptake and cooperation an urgent issue. But why would the client replace his allocated right to formulate the proposal with an interactional open-ended approach that makes him dependent upon the counselor's cooperation? Although Raymond's research was about responses to *yes/no*-interrogatives, his point that nonconforming responses might indicate some trouble with or resistance to the first-pair part (Raymond 2003: 949) will be considered here. In his terms, type-conforming

responses are the default response form and nonconforming responses are alternatives “to be introduced only when circumstances mandate a departure” (2003: 950).

So what is it that “mandates a departure” in the second extract? In line 496, not commented so far, the client says “I’ve thought a lot but I just don’t seem to know just what are possibilities”, which might be seen as indexing a problem of knowledge regarding education opportunities, but this is not properly understood by the counselor and if so this would suggest that the counselor suspend her inquiry and first inform on education opportunities for this group of clients. Besides, it should be added that the client in Extract (1), unlike the client in Extract (2), had attended a short introduction course to clarify rights and duties and to prepare the action plans. Due to this it is likely that the client in Extract (2) might be even more uncertain about the institutional opportunity structure than the client in Extract (1) who had attended this course. The problem-marker in line 496 seems to suggest that although the client admits to having plans, he would rather not formulate them at this moment as he is not able to judge about their feasibility.

But if this problem of not enough or uncertain knowledge is what occasioned the client’s noticeable manner of introducing his wish, might there be any interactional advantage to merely implying one’s wish versus explicitly formulating an action? The client’s personal contextualization in Extract (2) builds up a joint context for the proposal which both projects his wish and makes sense of it. In this respect it might be seen to be a pre-proposal building and a common “suitable ground” (Arminen 2005: 173) for the proposal, holding some argumentative qualities for the proposal as well (i.e., having a steady interest, having a supportive environment). But, as we saw in the increment in line 510, the client did not proceed to formulate the proposal, instead he awaited or fished for the counselor’s uptake. Why?

It is in the mobilization of the interactional resources of the co-present other that we see the joint construction of action at its clearest (Clift 2005), and the client’s act of not explicating is, though not necessarily designed to be so, also a test of the momentary solidarity (Heritage 1984). Talk around a matter in terms of telling/reporting might be a way of testing out whether an issue will be acceptable “without saying it” (Sacks 1992: 67) and by leaving to the recipient to discover the upshot of the telling (Drew 1984), the unfolding interaction gives clues on the recipient’s stance and willingness to go along with the topic at hand. This incremental approach for talking a proposal into being might thus give the client more control over what happens in the interaction and what happens to his “social face” (Goffman 1967). If the reception of the client’s telling is not encouraging, the client might choose to abort proposal making and seek refuge in telling only, which seems to be the case in line 510 of Extract (2) where the client sticks to the biographical frame. Now the coun-

selor does not respond much to the client's biographical tellings, which might have encouraged the client to complete proposal formulation, but at least she elaborates the pursued topic by asking a new question (line 515).

Hence, it is likely that talk around the matter in terms of "proposal-implying tellings" is a way of balancing the client's need to convey and discuss his wish, while reducing his accountability for raising a contingent or "rejectable" issue. On an official level of the conversation, the client has just provided some biographical information that occasioned the counselor's elaboration on the topic. Following Drew (1984: 137), this now allows the parties to attend to what is told for its own sake (being a policeman), rather than to what the telling might implicate (his suggesting to become a policeman). From the client's perspective, discussing a contingent proposal on this more opaque footing might then be preferable, as the client here is responsible for the telling and not for the proposal that might be implied in it (Drew 1984).

#### **4. Conclusion**

In vocational rehabilitation the counselor's eliciting question tends to allocate the responsibility of formulating a proposal/idea to the client. This paper has demonstrated in two cases clients' interactional efforts of complying with the professional's eliciting inquiry. The analysis shows that even clients with plans to report might orient to the eliciting question as somewhat "demanding," evidencing how the dilemma of "autonomy versus control" might be skillfully managed in situ. Both cases deal with young men seeking a long-term education, which albeit being the most ordinary measure within vocational rehabilitation, implies many contingent issues in terms of acceptability. It was found that clients' "cautious" ways of introducing plans demonstrate a practical orientation to this aspect, embodying in practice the dilemma of being free in an unpredictable environment as a client's concern. Empirical research may thus make professionals more reflective about their solution-eliciting practices as well as more sensitive to clients' attempts at escaping or at finding their own way into the matter at hand.

The interactional advantage of the counselor's eliciting question ("What have you been thinking about?") is perhaps obvious, securing the client an opportunity to introduce a topic bald-on-record. However, in Scollon and Scollon's (2001) terms, Extract (2) might represent an "inductive" (topic-delayed) way of approaching the proposal which attempts to first construct a joint (argumentative) context for the proposal before getting to the point, in contrast to the "deductive" pattern (topic first) in Extract (1), where the message/the proposal should be formulated early in the talk and then elaborated. Whereas the client in Extract (1) accepts the terms of the eliciting question, the speaker roles are transformed in Extract (2) as the client, by adopting "proposal-implying

tellings,” might be seen as invoking a joint “topic-to-be-explored” format, where the counselor’s co-participation is needed to accomplish proposal making. Possibly, the latter more distributed pattern reduces accountability for doing a sensitive action as well as increasing control over how the interaction unfolds as the formulation of the proposal here might be done cooperatively and “at the right moment” (Scollon and Scollon 2001), instead of at a “fixed moment” as the professional’s question–answer format suggests.

In practice the normative pressure of questions might be hard to suspend once it is established as the professional tends to monitor the client’s speech for the information she seeks, rather than appreciating the client’s more conversational manner. This brings up another dilemma, between “responsiveness and standardization,” dealing with the issue of taking into account the citizens’ wants and at the same time following the rules and legislations (Hjörne et al. 2010: 305). But the dilemma does not have to be restricted to *what* services clients are granted or not, as guidelines and procedures are more and more developed to also standardize *how* services are given and in this data corpus “the actor model” is evidently around. Besides, a new rigorous standardized methodology, a profiling tool for assessing the client’s work capability, has recently been implemented in NAV, which means extensive mapping of the client’s needs and preferences. This provides solid evidence for providing individually adapted services. However, there is a danger that the communication with clients is becoming standardized, too. Thus the neo-liberal positivist request for quality, informing professionals to ask particular kinds of questions, and perhaps a lot of them to ensure user’s participation, might in practice come into conflict with the clients’ scope for expressing themselves as individuals, rather than actors.

### **Appendix: Transcription conventions**

The following transcription conventions (based on Gail Jefferson’s (1989) system) are borrowed in part from the Web site of Charles Antaki, Professor of Language and Social Psychology, Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University (<http://www-staff.lboro.ac.uk/ssca1/notation.htm>):

word?	Rising intonation
word.	Stopping fall in tone
word,	Continuing intonation
(0.3)	Timed pause
[word	Square brackets aligned across adjacent lines denote the start of overlapping talk
.hh, hh	In-breath (note the preceding period) and out-breath, respectively.



wor-	A dash shows a sharp cut-off
wo:rd	Colons show that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound.
(words)	A guess at what might have been said if unclear
=word	The equals sign shows that there is no discernible pause between two speakers' turns or, if put between two sounds within a single speaker's turn, shows that they run together
<u>word</u> , WORD	Underlined sounds are louder, capitals louder still
°word°	Material between "degree signs" is quiet
>word word<	Inwards arrows show faster speech
→	Analyst's signal of a significant line
((words))	Transcriber's comments

## Notes

1. The notion "client" is not adopted in Norwegian welfare policies and by professionals, but the more dynamic notion "user" is routinely used. However, "user" is perhaps not as dynamic as the notion of "customer" used in the 1990s in the field of vocational rehabilitation.
2. Regarding clients' contribution the analytic attention of this paper is limited to how proposals are introduced into the meeting agenda in the first place, saving the issue of negotiation solutions for future publications. Clients' accounting activities have been studied within discourse analysis and social constructionism (Juhila 2004; Juhila et al. 2003; Mäkitalo 2006) and some even use extracts from planning sequences (Eskelinen, Olesen, and Caswell 2009; Mäkitalo 2003: 501). These studies nicely demonstrate that clients take an active role in moving themselves between institutional categories by taking part in the argumentative tradition of the setting.
3. Vehvilainen (2003) describes the counselor's practice of withholding advice due to counseling ideals of self-directedness in career counseling.
4. In Norway there has been an extensive reform of the welfare services, putting most services into one overall organization, "The Norwegian Labor and Welfare Service" (NAV), but on an old organization chart, vocational rehabilitation would belong to the National Employment Service.
5. There are also more specific restrictions to the access of certain measures. For example, education as a rule should be allowed for no more than three years, or how much money a year NAV can cover on fees, courses, and such.
6. Norway is a small country and the name of the client's desired action/vocation might in this paper have been replaced by related educations/professions, similar in interests and occupational status, to make sure that the client is not identified.
7. See the appendix for the transcription conventions.

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Janne Solberg is a sociologist and a Ph.D. student at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo. Her research interests are in social interaction in professional–client encounters, what is expected from clients, and especially what clients do to be accountable in the setting of vocational rehabilitation. An article from this project which deals with the accounting efforts of clients who do not have suggestions to make when requested, was published in *Qualitative Social Work* in September 2011. Her research has been funded by Vestfold University College. Address for correspondence: Olav Trygvassons gt. 17, 3125 Toensberg, Norway (Janne.solberg@hive.no & janne.solberg@hotmail.com).

**Activation encounters: Dilemmas of accountability in constructing clients as  
'knowledgeable'**

*Published in Qualitative Social Work, 10:381-398, 2011.*



**Making sense of accounting practices: Clients' reports of abandoned plans  
in Norwegian activation encounters**

(Unpublished manuscript)







**Arguing in professional-client encounters: Building cases through second-hand assessments**

*Accepted on 12 December 2013 for publication in Pragmatics & Society.*

*(The published version might be slightly different).*



## Appendix 1: Information letter and consent form 2008



## Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

### *”Oppfølgingsamtalen på NAV kontoret – Hva skjer?”*

#### **Bakgrunn og hensikt**

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i en doktorgradsstudie innen velferdsforskning utført av HENÆR-senteret ved Høgskolen i Vestfold. Studien er finansiert gjennom frie forskningsmidler bevilget fra Kunnskapsdepartementet. Formålet med forskningen er å få mer kunnskap om hva som skjer i møtet mellom bruker og veileder ved NAV kontorer i Norge. Studien ønsker å beskrive hva som skjer i samhandlingen mellom bruker og veileder når de møtes ansikt til ansikt for å diskutere innholdet av tjenestene. Hvilke roller har/tar deltakerne i denne typen møte, og hvilke språklige ressurser benytter man seg av? Du følges opp av NAV kontoret og vil derfor være i målgruppen for undersøkelsen.

#### **Hva innebærer studien?**

Studien innebærer at en samtale mellom deg og veileder vil bli tatt opp på bånd. Det betyr at det vil ligge en liten diktafon på bordet mens møtet pågår. Deltakelse vil også innebære at forskeren får tilgang til oppfølgingsplan og eventuelt vedtak som utarbeides i etterkant av samtalen.

Andre saksopplysninger kan være med på å kaste lys over det som blir sagt i samtalen, slik som for eksempel legeerklæringer, saksframstilling, søknadsskjema/CV. Dersom du ønsker at slike dokumenter skal være tilgjengelig for forskeren må du gi tillatelse i en egen erklæring. Se vedlagte samtykkeskjema.

Det er mest praktisk at NAV sender ut aktuelle saksopplysninger, men om du i stedet ønsker å gjøre dette selv, så er det er i orden. Forskeren trenger ikke tilgang til ditt personnummer. *I kopi av alle saksopplysninger som du eller NAV oversender etter ditt samtykke skal derfor fødselsnummer strykes ut og erstattes med fødselsår!*

Du vil i tillegg bli spurt om å fylle ut et spørreskjema. Spørreskjemaet omhandler både bakgrunnsopplysninger og din opplevelse av møtet. Dersom du ønsker det, kan du også skrive noe med egne ord om hvordan du opplevde møtet ved NAV kontoret. Det anbefales at du fyller ut spørreskjemaet et annet sted enn på NAV kontoret, for eksempel hjemme. Hvor skjemaet skal sendes framgår av svarkonvoluttene som følger med. Dersom skjemaet ikke blir returnert vil dette

tolkes som at du ikke ønsker å gi slike opplysninger, og du vil ikke bli kontaktet på nytt. NAV vil ikke under noen omstendigheter få tilgang til opplysninger fra spørreskjemaet.

Du kan være med i studien selv om du ikke ønsker å fylle ut spørreskjemaet og/eller gi tilgang til saksopplysninger ut over oppfølgingsplan/vedtak.

### **Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?**

Dataene som samles om deg skal kun brukes slik som beskrevet i hensikten med studien. Alle dataopplysninger vil bli behandlet uten navn og fødselsnummer eller andre direkte gjenkjenner opplysninger. Alle dataopplysninger vil bli forsvarlig oppbevart så lenge studien pågår.

Så snart prosjektet er ferdig vil alle dokumentopplysninger bli makulert. Likeledes vil lydbåndopptak og lydfiler bli slettet. Avskrift av samtalen vil ikke destrueres, men vil for all fremtid forbli anonymisert. Forhold som navn, bosted, helseopplysninger, yrke, fritidsaktiviteter osv som kan forekomme i samtalen, vil bli erstattet av andre kategorier slik at det ikke er mulig å kjenne deg igjen. Heller ikke NAV kontoret, konkrete attføringsbedrifter eller tredjepersoner vil bli omtalt med sitt egentlige navn. Anonymiseringen vil senest være fullført 1. september 2011 som er sluttdato for studien.

Det vil ikke være mulig å identifisere deg i resultatene av studien når disse publiseres.

### **Frivillig deltakelse**

Det er frivillig å delta i studien. Du kan når som helst og uten å oppgi noen grunn trekke ditt samtykke til å delta i studien. Dette vil ikke få noen som helst konsekvenser for stønaden eller oppfølgingen du mottar. Dersom du ønsker å delta, undertegner du samtykkeerklæringen på siste side.

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, kan du kontakte Janne Solberg ved Høgskolen i Vestfold, tlf 98409875/33037767. Hun kan også kontaktes dersom du har spørsmål til spørreskjemaet eller ønsker å snakke direkte med forskeren om hvordan du opplevde samtalen på NAV kontoret.

### **Samtykkeerklæring følger**

Postadresse:  
Høgskolen i Vestfold  
Henær-senteret  
Att. Janne Solberg  
Postboks 2243  
3103 TØNSBERG

## Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har fått informasjon om studien *Oppfølgingssamtalen på NAV kontoret – Hva skjer?* og er villig til å delta. Jeg samtykker i at forskeren får tilsendt kopi av oppfølgingsplan og vedtak.

Jeg samtykker i at forskeren også får tilsendt kopi av siste            Ja            Nei  
legeerklæring/søknadsskjema/CV/saksresyme  
(Stryk det som ikke passer).

-----  
(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Jeg bekrefter å ha gitt informasjon om studien

-----  
(Signert av veileder, dato)





Appendix 2: Translation of Norwegian data extracts



Section 3.2 in the dissertation:

(ID 6)

- 2 v: **Samtalen i dag den handlar (da) om- o:m aktivitetsplan eller handlingsplan.**  
co: Our talk today will (then) be about- about:t the activity plan or action : [plan.
- 3 b: **[(Javel,)]**  
Co: **[(Okay),]**
- b: **har du noen planer for meg?**  
cl: do you have any plans for me?
- 4 (0.9)
- 5 v: **e:::h, ja jeg har en måte å angripe det på.**  
co: e:::h, yes I have a way of approaching it.

Article I: “Accepted and resisted: the client’s responsibility for making proposals in activation encounters”

Extract 1 (ID 9, bruker (b)= mann, veilder (v)=kvinne)

- 23 v: **e:hm følte du at du fikk informasjon om hvilke tiltak som fins**  
co: e:hm did you feel that you received information about what initiatives there are
- v: **på attføring, hvilke muligheta som er å-**  
co: for rehabilitation, what possibilities there are and-  
((klientens gjenfortelling av info er utelatt))
- 37 v: **og høvelig arbeid for deg, (0.2) ka er det?**  
co: and suitable work for you, (0.2) what is that?
- 38 b: **ja si det, : [e::hm.**  
cl: hard to say, : [e::hm.
- 39 v: **[°ja**  
co: **[°yes**
- 40 b: **Æ ha:r=e: tenkt en del,**  
cl: I've: done some thinking,
- 39 v: °m°
- 40→ b: **=og då tenke eg (egentlig) på å bli lærer,**  
cl:=and then I (really) think about becoming a teacher,
- 41→ v: **du har lyst til å bli lærer.**  
co: you want to become a teacher.
- 42 b: **=ja.**  
cl:=yes.  
((veileders reformuleringer utelatt))
- 56 v: **mm, har du sjekka litt opp ka som skal tel å-**  
co: mm, have you checked a bit what it takes to-

Extract 2 (ID 2, bruker (b)=mann, veileder(v)=kvinne)

- 465→ v: **Nei, har du tenkt**  
co: No, have you thought
- 466 b: **>s[å]nne ting<**  
cl: >th[ings like that<
- 467→ v: **[på HVA du kan gjøre=HVA kan du gjøre når du ikke ska være elektriker lenger da,**  
co: [about WHAT you can do=WHAT can you do when you are no longer an electrician,  
v: **hva har du tenkt på da?**  
co: what have you thought about?
- 468 (0.5)
- 469 b: **(ja-m) jeg har jo tenkt ganske (mye da),**  
cl: (yes-m) I have thought quite (a lot),  
(spøk utelatt)
- 496 b: **.h jeg har tenkt mye men=e:: jeg veit liksom ikke helt hva: som er muligheter eller-**  
cl: .h I have thought a lot but=e:: I just don't seem to know just what are opportunities or-  
b: **[jeg har liksom ikke**  
cl: [I just don't kinda
- 497 v: **[Hva er eheh nei du hakke landa på nonting?**  
co: [What is eheh no you have not made up your mind?
- 498 (0.5)
- 499→ b: **(nja) altså jeg har tenkt veldig mye på:: b- For jeg har snakka en god del-**  
cl: (well) I mean I have thought a great deal about::t b- Because I have talked a lot-  
b: **Jeg kjenner en god del politimenn.**  
cl: I know a lot of policemen.
- 500 v: **[°mm**
- 501 b: **[Jeg har snakka en god del med de. Å de:t er noe som jeg s- det var en av de tinga**  
cl: [I have talked quite a lot with them. And tha:t is something I t- that was one of the things  
b: **jeg (0.3) når jeg skulle ta no utdannelse da når jeg var 16-17 år,**  
cl: I (0.3) when I was going to get an education when I was 16-17 years,  
v: **m.**
- 502
- 503 b: **så var det lissom, enten så var det håndverker eller så (var det)-**  
cl: then it was sort of like, either becoming a skilled worker or (it was)-
- 504 v: **°okay**
- 505 b: **for jeg har brødre som har vært det i mange år,**  
cl: because I have brothers who did that for several years,
- 506 v: **.hja**  
co: .hyes
- 507 b: **og da har det liksom vært sånn- (0.7) .h det har vært en interesse for meg.**  
cl. and then it has sort of been like- (0.7) .h it has been an interest to me.
- 508 v: **>hja,<**  
co: >hyes<
- 509 (0.2)
- 510 → b: **e::h me:n da (blei det elektriker da)**  
cl: e::h but then (I became an electrician)
- 511 v: **da blei det**

- co: then you became
- 512 b: **=(det blei lissom)**  
cl: =(it sort of was)
- 513 v: ja. .hja  
co. yes, .hyes
- 514 b: **Det var litt enklere trur jeg=det var en- litt derfor trur jeg og.**  
cl: It was a bit simpler I think=it was a- a little bit because of that I think too.
- 515 v: **Hva slags=e: utdanning,=hva kreves for å være politimann?**  
co: What kind of education,= what is required to be a policeman?

## Article II: “Activation Encounters: Dilemmas of Accountability in Constructing Clients as ‘Knowledgeable’”

Extract 1 (ID 4, bruker(b)=kvinne, veileder (v)=mann)

- 58 v: **eh ha- har du tenkt no på hva det (.) hva det skulle være da?**  
co: eh ha- have you thought anything about what that (.) what that could be?
- 59 (1.2)
- 60 b: **.h Jeg vet egentlig ikke hva de:t-**  
cl: .h I do not really know what tha:t-
- 61 (0.4)
- 62 v: °Nei.  
co: °No.
- 63 (1.6)
- 64 b: **Jeg vet jo: (.) på en måte hva jeg vil studere sånn halveis og-**  
cl: I do know (.) sort of what I want to study like halfway and-
- 65 (.)
- 66 v: **okey, mm.**
- 67 b: **hva jeg interesserer meg for**  
cl: what I am interested in
- 68 v: **mm,**
- 69 b: **Menne-**  
cl: But:e-
- 70 (1.2)
- 71 v: **>Hva er det da?<**  
co: >What is that then?<
- 72 (1.2)
- 73 → b: **Eh:,(0.5) jeg vet ikke helt hva det kalles men jeg har lyst til å jobbe med barn og**  
cl: Eh:, (0.5) I dont know exactly what it is called but I feel like working with children and  
b: **ungdom,**  
cl: youth,

Extract 2 (ID 7, bruker (b)=kvinne, veileder (v)=mann)

- 4 v: **e:h handlingsplan?**  
co: e:h action-plan?
- 5 b: **mm?**
- 6 v: **eh har du tenkt (på) siden sist vi prata (om en)?**  
v: eh have you thought (about) since last time we talked (about it)?
- 7 (1,1)
- 8 → b: **Ja jeg hadde jo tenkt mye,**  
cl: yes I certainly had thought a lot,
- 9 v: **du hadde tenkt mye før og det?**  
co: you had thought a lot before and so?
- 10 b: **ja**  
cl: yes
- 11 v: **=ja**  
co: =yes
- 12 b: **ja, ja.**  
cl: yes, yes.
- 13 b: **e::h**
- 14 (2,0)
- 15 → b: **har jeg- men jeg har ikke kommet- jeg har ikke tenkt noe mer**  
cl: I have- but I have not got- I have not thought any more  
b: **videre utover (0,4) [( hva) jeg (ment) sist.**  
cl: further on (0,4) [(what) I (meant) last time.
- 16 v: **[nei, nettopp**  
co: [no, exactly

Extract 3 (ID 10, bruker (b)=mann, veileder (v)=kvinne)

- 58 v: **(...), men ka er det du kunne tenkt deg å gjort?**  
co: (...), but what is it that you would like to do?
- 59 (1.2)
- 60 b: **Nei jeg lurer skrekkelig på dette HVA- (.)hva (for noe jeg) kan.=Men**  
cl: No I really wonder about this WHAT- (1.7) what (kind of things I) can manage.= But  
b: **det er ikke så lett å SI det, for jeg veit ikke hva som-**  
cl: that is not so easy to SAY, because I don't know what-  
61 (3.3) (hammerslag, byggearbeid som høres gjennom hele samtalen)
- 62 b: **Vi pratet da om vaktmester, men det blir jo (oppramping og kontrollørarbeid så det).**  
cl: We then talked about being a caretaker, but that means of course (escalation and inspector-work so that).
- 63 (1.1)
- 64 v: **Mye gåing ofte der [og,**  
co: Often much walking there [too,
- 65 b: **[\*ja**

- cl: [°yes
- 66 v: =men det er meir sånn variert=at du kan kanskje bestem litte g- dagen din sjøl,  
co:=but it is more like varied=that you maybe can govern a little b- your day yourself,  
v: **at det er litt friere?**  
co: that it is a bit freer?
- 67 b: =(°nja)  
cl: =(°nyes)
- 68 (1.9)
- 69 b: **Nei, (så) det ikke så lett å si jeg har tenkt på et spesielt yrke.**  
cl: No, (so) it isn't that easy to say that I have thought about a particular occupation.
- 70 v: (nei?)  
co: (no?)
- 71 (1.0)
- 72 v: **Men de:t kanskje burde vært no som du fikk brukt litt av det du kan sånn fra**  
co: But perhaps it should be something where you can use some of your skills and such from  
v: **veiarbeid da?=at du-det-du har (.)jobba med i mange år da.**  
co: roadwork?=that you-what- you have (0.7) worked with for years then.
- 73 b: =**Jada jeg ser det(=det er det jeg ønsker meg)**  
co: =Of course I see that(=that is what I want)
- 74 v: **.hja (.) mm.**  
co: .hyes (.) mm.
- 75 b: = **>men så problem.<**  
cl: =>but then problems.<
- 76 (.)
- 77 v: °m.
- 78 (.)
- 79 v: °.hja  
Co: °.hyes
- 80 b: **Nå skal jeg på sjukehuset i morra da og ta noen- få noen- koste på nye**  
cl: Now I am going to the hospital tomorrow to get som- get some- treat some new  
b: **støttebandasjer da**  
cl: support bandages

Extract 4 (ID 4, bruker(b)=kvinne, veileder(v)=mann)

- 99 v: **e:h (2.3) men- ska (vi) si nå at du har fått innvilga yrkesretta attføring, har**  
co: e:h (2.3) but- let (us) say now that you have been granted vocational rehabilitation, have  
v: **du tenkt no`på- på hva- hva du hadde tenkt å bruke det til?**  
co: you thought anything about- about- what did you have in mind to use it for?
- 100 (0.8)
- 101 v: **hva du skulle gjøre for no?**  
co: what you were supposed to do?
- 102 (2.0)
- 103 b: **e:h (0.4) jeg ha::r- (1.2) på en måte jeg vet ikke helt,**  
co: eh (0.4) I hav:e- (1.2) in a way I do not know exactly,



- 104 v: **nei?**  
co: no?
- 105 b: **men=e: det jeg fikk høre eller snakka med en eller annen annen her,**  
co: but=e: what I heard or talked about with someone around here,
- 106 v: **ja?**  
co: yes?
- 107 → b: **var at ja jeg kunne være med på ku:rs å:, (hermer)**  
cl: was that yes I could join a cou:rse a:nd, (mimic-voice)
- 108 v: **=ja,**  
v: =yes,
- 109 → b: **og sånn. (hermer)**  
b: and such. (mimic-voice)
- 110 v: **mm,**
- 111 (0,4)
- 112 → b: **og det var lurt og de hadde et kurs for folk som hadde angst å:, (hermer)**  
cl: and that was smart and they had a course for people who have anxiety a:nd, (mimic-voice)
- 113 v: **ja,**  
co: yes,
- 114 → b: **og det kunne vært lurt å:, (hermer)**  
cl: and that could be smart a:nd, (mimic-voice)
- 115 v: **ja?**  
co: yes?
- 116 b: **ja.**  
cl: yes.
- 117 v: **mm.**
- 118 (0,8)
- 119 b: **°(Så) tenkte jeg ja ja kurs ja (sikkert bra). : [hhhh ((latter))**  
cl: °(Then I thought yes yes course yes (surely fine).[hhhh (laughter)
- 120 v: [hhhh
- 121 v: **Syns du det høres lurt ut?**  
co: Do you think it sounds smart?
- 122 b: **JA ↑DA**  
cl: OF ↑COURSE
- 123 v: **ja? Mm.**  
co: yes? Mm.
- 124 (0,7)
- 125 b: **je- jeg har en venninne som også har attføring >og hun snakker om< det er ganske**  
cl: I- I have a friend who also is in rehabilitation >and she talks about< it is pretty  
b: **bra: og**  
cl: goo:d a:nd