

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

**A Study of Street-level bureaucracy and young clients in two rural
communities**

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PREFACE

In the 1980s I was a student at the University of Bergen, Department of Administration and Organization Theory. During that time, I became acquainted with and inspired by Michael Lipsky's theory on Street-level bureaucracy. His theoretical perspective on how organisations function when working with clients of services was illuminating. Many years later, at my current place of work, Volda University College, I learned to appreciate the relevance of contextualizing public service organizations that implement the Norwegian activation policy, within the framework of the specific communities where they operate. During the 2000s I was involved in a research project that looked into matters mentioned above. This work attempts to contribute to our understanding of Street-level bureaucracy in two interrelated ways. By concentrating on young single mothers and unemployed youth, I have focused on the types of *consequences* one may discover from being in the client position. This is done by investigating the *local frames* of the communities where these clients live. By frames I mean properties of the local labour market, norms related to work and conduct of life, and traits of local street-level bureaucracies with whom the clients have a bureaucratic relation.

There are many persons that deserve to be thanked for contributing to the process of writing this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

Introduction

I start this chapter by referring to the experiences of a young client¹ of welfare services in a Norwegian municipality at the turn of the millennium². He had become a client of welfare services due to problems connected to long-term unemployment and drug abuse, and had thus established a long-lasting³ relationship with the Social Welfare Office⁴, the Local Employment Office⁵ and the Social Security Office⁶ in the community where he grew up and currently lived. Over the years his experiences with these offices changed—he became more critical towards the content of services, aspects of the interaction with the officials and what it meant to him to be in a client position with these offices. His major experiences may be presented in the following. Firstly, he experienced low efficiency from the offices in the efforts used to try to qualify him for work. Instead of being quickly directed towards a suitable job by the offices, he was “shuffled” back and forth between them and their arrangements—a situation that “cemented” his position as a client, as he saw it. Secondly, his experiences with the officials were sometimes a humiliating encounter. These experiences grew out of his relationship with the Social Welfare Office, and what he recognised as uncertain rules regarding decisions concerning financial support from this office. Since the rules were seen as vague, he felt the need to portray himself as “poor” and “helpless” in order to improve his chances of obtaining support. This also meant revealing aspects of his life story, which he saw as embarrassing to talk about in front of public officials. Thirdly, his status as a client with the Social Welfare Office was a burden for him. To be a client at this office finally became shameful to him as he was concerned with what close relatives and “the community” as such might think of him. Mainly, the client felt his position there meant he was a deviant person, one who was on drugs and long-term unemployed and thus went against local norms. The shame he felt emanated from having established a relationship with the Social Welfare Office which compelled him to find ways to try to hide this relationship. He attempted to schedule appointments at the office at hours of the day when he thought it was

¹ The concept of “client” will be defined later in this chapter.

² This person will later be presented as respondent B-10, who lived in a community nicknamed “the Bay”. This is from an interview which is part of the empirical material upon which this work is based.

³ This man stated that he had been a client for approximately 10 years.

⁴ The Norwegian term is *Sosialkontoret* (Chaffey 1988).

⁵ The Norwegian term is *Aetat* (Chaffey 1988).

⁶ The Norwegian term is *Trygdekontoret* (Chaffey 1988).

unlikely he would be seen entering the office, and he was preoccupied with not being seen in the waiting room as well.

Above I have presented a listing of some of the experiences a young client gained from being in a relationship with and processed by welfare bureaucracies, and include the impact the local community had on his experiences. His experiences may serve as an illustration of how the transformation from a national policy into a specific practice may be interpreted, and what kind of dilemmas might face the individual client.

In this work I focus on two client categories: *unemployed youth* and *single mothers*⁷.

The following is the research interest in this study: what happens if we step down from the national level and put policy intentions in the background, and ask how local actors experience and judge the position of young clients of services supplied by local variants of a street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 1977, 1980; Prottas 1979; Bleiklie 1997; Brown 1981; Evans and Harris 2006; Ellis 2011) within the framework of the communities where they live?

Uncertainties of the liberal state and the activation policy

The title of this work is “from policy to practice” which indicates that its main focus is how a certain public policy is implemented, judged and experienced by local actors. This section will focus on two issues. Firstly, to point out characteristics of how liberal states steer the individual and thus address the uncertainties that are inherent in a specific policy. Secondly, to present the actual policy that is the focus of this work: the Norwegian activation policy. The term policy is linked herein to the focused client categories: young single mothers and unemployed youth, and means the general aims, demands and programmes formulated at state level towards these target groups (cf. Lødemel and Trickey 2001).

The liberal state, governmentality and bio-power

According to Foucault (1991a) the state institution has, over the centuries, changed the manner in which it steers its population and thus the way it exerts power over them. In liberal states the steering is not restricted to repressive forms of power and the protection of the territory of the state. In addition, the liberal state engages in the “government of population” which means that it tries to steer the individual with regards to issues of “welfare”. Through specific institutions, certain techniques and programmes, i.e., “social evils” like poverty and unemployment, are planned to be alleviated (Foucault 1991a; Dean 1999). This type of

⁷ The arguments for choosing these two client categories will be presented later in this chapter in connection with the presentation of the problem statement.

steering—“the government of souls and lives” (Foucault 1991a:87)—has become a tendency in modern societies, a process which Foucault has named governmentality and bio-power. This means that state power may occur in decentralised relationships, for instance between clients and welfare bureaucracies. An example is that the individual may be seen (by the state) as needing to change his life according to specific norms of society and, therefore, the (local) apparatus of the state may be seen as a disciplinary institution attempting to correct human behaviour according to those specific norms (cf. also Heede 1997; May 2006).

The important message from the governmentality literature is to anticipate possible dilemmas when a certain state policy is carried out, by examining in a critical and specific manner how the steering takes place and what kind of consequences occur (Foucault 1982; O’Malley et al. 1997; Dean 2002; Villadsen 2002). One example of a critical and specific approach is Fraser and Gordon’s analysis of welfare dependency in the U.S. (Fraser and Gordon 1994). The state may design programmes that are officially presented as aid to certain target groups—such as young single mothers. The approach of Fraser and Gordon is to go beyond political intentions and investigate how a specific programme⁸ is viewed by the clients and the society at large. They found that the AFDC-programme may have stigmatising effects upon the clients since the programme involves moral- and means-testing, and offers low stipends. The programme may also be associated with the stigma that dependency upon welfare can be (falsely) linked to drug dependency (Fraser and Gordon 1994:32). Stigmatisation from the society is thus explained by a certain theory of dependency in this case—that of illegitimate dependency, since the clients are seen as unworthy of the aid.

Another example is Cruikshank’s analysis of empowerment (Cruikshank 1999) as a view that poor and marginalized groups should be, and have the potential to become, empowered, is influential in modern liberal states (Dean 1999). Empowerment may be understood as a main focus upon the individual’s ability to release his potential to act in his own interest to change a marginalized position (Bookman and Morgen 1988). What makes Cruikshank’s approach a critical one is, however, to argue that empowerment is actually a power relationship between the state and the individual. Empowerment is thus not basically about “self-governance”, but

⁸ Fraser and Gordon (1994) refer to the public assistance programme Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which is linked to young single mothers.

rather about state intervention⁹ in the lives of individuals in the name of “self-governance” (Cruikshank 1999). Cruikshank points to four aspects of empowerment that constitutes a potential for critical analysis, that is, the relationship of empowerment is established by expertise in the form of professionals and street-level bureaucrats as well as marginalized individuals as experts of their own lives. The relationship is initiated by one party in order to empower another party. Empowerment comes from the knowledge of those to be empowered based upon social science models of power, powerlessness, poverty and marginalization. Relationships of empowerment are both “voluntary and coercive” (Cruikshank 1999:72). A major insight gained from Cruikshank’s study is that policies of empowerment contain uncertainties. It is uncertain what outcomes are likely when individuals are forced or pressured to become empowered. It is further likely to assume that there may be uncertainties connected to the knowledge base behind programmes of empowerment: are marginalized individuals, for instance, able to change their own lives in order to realise their self-interests?

Universalism, particularism and the local apparatus of the Norwegian welfare state

It is reasonable to view the construction of welfare states as part of a modernization process (Rokkan 1970) that took place in several countries, when encompassing state welfare appeared primarily after the Second World War. Welfare states are at the present designed in different ways, such as Lødemels’ (cf. Lødemels 1997) analysis on the difference between the British and the Norwegian welfare states. Cf. also Titmuss’ distinction between welfare *models*: “the Residual Model of Welfare”; “the Handmaiden Model”; and “the Institutional Redistributive Model” (Titmuss 1974), and Esping-Andersen’s (1990) distinctions between “liberal”, “corporatist” and “social democratic” welfare states.

In this work the focus is on a Norwegian experience, and I concentrate therefore on important aspects of the “social democratic” welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1990), sometimes also referred to as part of the Nordic Welfare States (cf. Kautto et al. 2001). The Norwegian experience has as its main focus universal services, which are directed to all citizens of the state, or at least to broad categories of them, and this is well illustrated in the Norwegian system for social security.¹⁰ The development towards universality has been a part of the political process in Norway since 1945 (Hatland 1992; Lødemel 1997). The universalistic approach implies that the Norwegian welfare state include the new middle class. Still, some

⁹ One of Cruikshank’s examples is the U.S. government programme CAP (Community Action Programmes), which was part of President Johnson’s War on Poverty policy (Cruikshank 1999).

¹⁰ The Norwegian term for social security is *trygd* (Kirkeby:2001:579)

services are particularistic and means tested, like the social assistance,¹¹ which until July 2006 was administered by a municipal organization (i.e.: the Social Welfare Office). Another trait of the Norwegian welfare state is its emphasis on fusing welfare and work, both in terms of the full employment policy and the activation policy (Esping-Andersen 1990; Halvorsen and Stjernø 2008).

In this work the local apparatus of the Norwegian welfare state is restricted to the Social Security Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office. Below follows a condensed presentation of some of the main and general characteristics of these offices.

The Social Security Office is an office that administers rights to those entitled¹² to them and is an implementer of universal services based upon rule following (subsumption), and thus resembles a Weberian bureaucracy where equal treatment and legal protection is central (Helgøy et al 2010).

However; this office to some extent also relates to discretionary decisions when processing clients, for instance whether clients should receive disablement pension or be directed towards alternative forms of work (cf. Solheim, 1992; Westin 1994).

The competence of the officials has generally been based upon internal training and practice (Nilsen 1999). In 2001 27% of all employed within that service¹³ had higher education at college or university levels (NOU: 2004:13).

The Local Employment Office is an office that mediates work to unemployed persons and administers work related rehabilitation, as well as offering training programmes to facilitate entry into the labour market. A central function of these officials is a role as counsellors towards their applicants or “customers”. This office has a central function in implementing the activation policy. This office is not fundamentally driven by formal rules, but rather by goal attainment measured in quantitative numbers. These officials have a variety of educational and occupational backgrounds, and internal training is typical (Helgøy et al 2010). In 2004 36% of all employed within this service¹⁴ had higher education at college or university levels (NOU 2004:13).

¹¹ The Norwegian term for social assistance is *sosialhjelp* (Haugen 1996:392)

¹² Examples: Old age pension, disability pension and support to single providers (cf. Helgøy et al 2010)

¹³ Trygdestaten

¹⁴ Aetat

The Social Welfare Office manages particularistic services where means-testing and extensive discretion is emphasised. The decisions performed by these officials are not generally based upon subsumption according to formal (legal) rules, but on the application of professional knowledge towards the individual applicant. This office is oriented towards the needs of the client, and the officials as a consequence work closely with their clients—gaining insight into their personal problems in order to provide them help (cf. Helgøy and Ravneberg 2003). The main role of these officials is as “helpers” for their clients (Helgøy et al 2010).

This office has roots back to the poor-relief system, but has been professionalised from the 1960s, signifying that the social worker profession has gained a foothold in the Social Welfare Offices—a development encouraged by the state (Terum 1996). This does not however mean that all employed at the Social Welfare Offices has a social worker background. In 2000, 50% of those employees had a social worker education, and 14% had other types of higher educational background at college or university levels (NOU 2004:13).

It is estimated that 15%¹⁵ of all of the clients at the three offices on a national basis receive services from at least two of the offices mentioned here. Typically these are young recipients of social assistance that have complex problems related to drug abuse, mental illnesses, and low levels of education and work experience that necessitate a need for services from more than one office. However, some of the single providers are also in need of services from more than one of the offices mentioned above (NOU 2004:13).

The activation policy

Activation policy is meant as the tendency of the state to link clients of welfare services to work and/or educational programmes (Jessop 1993). Sometimes the term workfare¹⁶ is used in a specific situation, namely when compulsory programmes or schemes are designed towards recipients of social assistance with a marginal connection to the labour market (Lødemel and Trickey 2001; Hammer and Hyggen 2006). When the policy is directed towards individuals that have a stronger potential to be mediated to ordinary forms of work, the term active labour market programmes (ALMP) is sometimes used (Hammer and Hyggen 2006). Both forms are part of the activation policy and are relevant to the problems discussed in this work.

The empirical research upon which this work is based was conducted during the years 2000, 2001 and 2005, approximately 10-15 years after the introduction of activation in Norway.

¹⁵ This figure is based upon data from the period 1993-2000 (Fevang et. al 2004).

¹⁶ The term workfare is short for “work-for-your-welfare” (Nathan 1993).

Compared to other countries activation in Norway is characterised by a high degree of decentralisation to local welfare bureaucracies with regard to implementation as, for instance, “administrators have a high degree of discretion over sanctioning policy” (Trickey 2001:280). Activation can be seen as a specific policy context for this analysis, as there were important changes made by the state in the conditions for receiving support from the welfare state generally, and specifically for single parents and unemployed youth. Furthermore, activation implies changes in the goals regarding working with the clients. The local welfare bureaucracies were supposed to increase their competence with regard to advice and counselling. A major political goal was to increase emphasis on the need for clients to become employed or undertake educational programmes. To achieve this, the state made the periods of financial support shorter. The essence of the activation programme in Norway, according to Kildal (1998), was to require work and educational duties in return for welfare services. If the clients did not accept this condition they could be denied services¹⁷. The activation policy in Norway applies generally to both single mothers and unemployed youth.

For *single parents* a major change was introduced in 1998 when the period of transitional support was lowered from ten to three years. Educational support on the other hand was strengthened¹⁸. Support for single parents is a universal social right. Most single parents receiving support from the Social Security Offices in Norway are females (cf. Kleven and Lien 2007). Approximately 20% of the single mothers are defined as “young” (in the age range of 16-30 years) in 2005 (Kleven and Lien 2007). As a category, single mothers and their children are relatively less well off than other child-families (cf. Kjeldstad 1998; Kleven and Lien 2007; Halvorsen and Stjernø 2008), and they are less integrated in the labour market compared to mothers that are married or live with a partner (Ugreninov 2003). On the other hand, figures from 2001 show that 88% of single parents had an occupational income (Ugreninov 2003), and Kleven and Lien (2007) show that many young single mothers are either at work or in an educational programme. Figures from 2005 concerning young single parents show that their main incomes are transitions between the social security system and occupational incomes¹⁹ (Kleven and Lien 2007). In 2005, 14% of all single providers had received social assistance in Norway, and the average of the population at that time was three

¹⁷ Cf. also Lødemel and Trickey (2001) who underline that workfare is compulsory.

¹⁸ Source: Stortingsmelding 35 (1994-1995).

¹⁹ Measured in share of total income the exact figures for 2005 concerning young single parents (16-30 years old) were: occupational income 38%, transitions through the social security system 61% and social assistance 11.3% (Kleven and Lien 2007:192).

percent. In 2005, the average time for social assistance support for all single providers was four months (Kleven and Lien 2007).

Another important change in the activation policy, affecting the *young and unemployed* that receive support from the means-tested social services, was related to the possibility of forcing *demands* upon the clients²⁰. If one receives social assistance there is a possibility that the law²¹ will require they claim suitable work²² in return for economic support. One of the characteristics of activation is to avoid having a passive clientele (Kildal 1998). This is to be achieved by establishing tailor-made services suited to the individual's specific abilities and needs (cf. Lødemel 1998).

It is important to note that the activation policy may have some unintentional consequences for the receivers of the services. Lødemel (1998) underlined the danger that the work which clients of the social services were offered may be seen as having less value than other forms of work.

Kildal stressed the problem of incompatible goals.

The arrangement is supposed to have a deterrent as well as an educational function. These goals are incompatible. The deterrent function, expressed in the form of lower wages than ordinary work, in temporary work characterized by few challenges might easily lead to the experience of punishment rather than that of a possibility (Kildal 1998:24)²³.

It may be stressed that the content of the activation programme, where forced work is required, is an arrangement not well suited for reducing stigma and personal humiliation (Kildal 1998).

One may argue that the combination of client status and work might affect the client in an unfavourable way. Another problem addressed by Lødemel was that the implementation of the activation policy by the social services departments had too little focus on training and sometimes lacked coordination with the labour market agency (Lødemel 1998:151²⁴; cf. also Smith 2000).

²⁰ The Norwegian name for this is *vilkår*. This is part of The Social Services Act regulating social services and was introduced in 1991.

²¹ "It can be made a condition that the recipient carries out suitable work in the town of residence for as long as the person receives benefits" (Social Services Act 1991, Article 5-3.2.2).

²² Examples of "suitable work" was "cleaning up public parks, painting of buildings or helping the elderly/disabled" (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 1993).

²³ My translation, ARD.

²⁴ This was based upon a survey among social service departments carried out in the mid 1990s.

Lødemel (1998, 2001) and Kildal (1998) were concerned with the implementation of the policy in small and transparent societies. Lødemel (2001:152) argued that the stigma connected to social assistance may be “stronger felt” in such societies compared to towns and cities. Both of them saw it as important *how* the local welfare bureaucracies implemented this policy. I believe it is important to keep in mind that policies, having ambitions of being individual and targeted, will face the danger of singling persons out as deviants needing special help or attention.

Slettebø (2000) pointed to another danger, when he argued that a certain way of implementing the activation policy could be in conflict with goals in social work, and thus contradict professional norms. Under specific conditions, the focus on demands may contradict the idea of empowerment, which stresses equality between the social worker and the client. Slettebø thought that the focus on work might lead to a stereotyped conception that “all” clients are able to work. He argued that some clients have so many and complex problems that they might *not* be *able* to perform work satisfactorily. This is a relevant argument since the activation programme in Norway is strongly tied to social assistance clients, which implies that persons, that in earlier times would be considered as unable or incapable of working now are directed towards work (Trickey 2001). Some studies underline that certain individuals receiving social assistance have barriers against being able to participate in ordinary forms of work. In their study of a Norwegian ALMP²⁵ targeted at single parents, immigrants, young people and long-term social assistance recipients, Rønsen and Skarðhamar (2009) found that individuals with vocational disabilities and long-term unemployment had greater difficulties gaining employment compared to individuals with previous work experience. Similar findings have been reported by Hammer and Hyggen (2006) and Dahl and Lorentzen (2005). Some studies suggest that some of the clients on social assistance have problems relating to gaining work because of problems linked to alcohol- and drug-abuse, as well as mental problems (Schafft and Spjelkavik 2006; van der Wel et al. 2006; Lorentzen 2006). Other studies underscore that clients on social assistance is a heterogenic category, where some of them have more personal resources and better chances of becoming integrated on the labour market than others (Skilbrei 2000; Vannevjen 2001; Lødemel and Johannessen 2005).

²⁵ Active Labour Market Programmes.

The problem statement: consequences for clients

The purpose of the previous paragraphs is to anchor the problems to be discussed in this work. The Foucaultian perspectives on the state, by the use of the governmentality and bio-power concepts, underline the uncertainties that are attached to public policies. The activation policy may be understood as a variant of governmentality/bio-power, as it is focused on changing individual behaviour by demanding clients to find work or/and pursue an education.

Official policy goals in the field of welfare are to integrate individuals into society and foster empowerment on the individuals' own situations. A Foucaultian perspective implies to challenge this "official doctrine", by investigating possible unintended consequences of specific policies when they are transformed into practice. Despite a "good intentions" stigmatisation, personal humiliation and dependency may be the outcome for some of the clients of welfare programmes. Since empowerment is linked to state power, it is also uncertain what outcomes are likely for certain clients, especially marginalised ones, if they are pressured to become empowered. In other words, there are good reasons for examining how policy is turned into practice.

In order to study the transformation of policy into practice this work focuses upon qualitative interviews with young clients (single mothers and unemployed youth), street-level bureaucrats (at the Social Welfare Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office) and employed persons in two Norwegian rural communities.

The **problem statement** is fundamentally related to the young clients and is formulated in the following way:

- ***What are the consequences for young single mothers and unemployed youth from being clients at local welfare bureaucracies?***

In this work the definition of *unemployed youth* is persons in their 20s that, for the moment, have ended their schooling and who have not established a stable connection with the working life. Some of these persons have had an unstable and sporadic relationship with paid work, but all have been unemployed for some time. The definition of *young single mothers* is persons in their 20s with a documented marital status that includes them in the statutory rights available to this target group offered by the social security system (cf. Heggen, Djupvik and Jørgensen 2003)²⁶.

²⁶ Cf. also chapter two.

By consequences I mean the material help the clients receive from local street-level bureaucracies as well as the procedural effects; what being a client means to their identity and self-esteem. This means that “consequences” affects the outcome of the client position.

Four research elements are addressed herein in order to illuminate the problem statement:

- **How do young single mothers and unemployed youth experience being clients at the local welfare bureaucracies?**
- **How do the street-level bureaucrats at the local welfare bureaucracies implement the activation policy towards young single mothers and unemployed youth?**
- **How are young single mothers and unemployed youth judged by people locally as being clients with the local welfare bureaucracies?**
- **What are the local frames with regard to client experiences, judgments of the clients and the implementation of the activation policy in the two communities?**

This means that the consequences for the clients are illuminated by taking all of these four questions into consideration, and thus the clients’ own experiences are but one “voice” concerning this.

This study focuses on and compares two client categories: single mothers and unemployed youth. From the referred literature in this chapter, it is likely to assume at the outset that these two categories are generally in different situations. The unemployed youth are by definition marginal to the labour market, and single mothers seem to be more closely integrated with the labour market, according to the literature. So what is the argument for including these two categories in this work as central to the problem statement? I believe there are two main arguments; one that is “political” and the other, “theoretical”.

By “*political*” I simply mean that both of these client categories are central to the Norwegian activation policy. Both categories are to be seen as target groups with regard to the policy of the Norwegian welfare state—something that is documented in a series of white papers²⁷. It is seen as important to improve the economic situation for single mothers through public financial support and by directing them towards permanent jobs and/or educational programmes. It is also official policy to direct unemployed youth towards job training, permanent work and educational programmes to avoid their becoming marginalised. It is part

²⁷ Stortingsmelding nr. 35 (1994-1995); Stortingsmelding nr. 39 (2001-2002); Stortingsmelding nr. 6 (2002-2003); Stortingsmelding nr. 14 (2002-2003); Stortingsmelding nr. 9 (2006-2007).

of the policy towards these target groups to acquire a more coordinated welfare system to secure their successful integration into the labour market. A main goal at the state level with regard to single mothers and unemployed youth is to achieve what is vaguely defined as “social inclusion” by directing them towards work²⁸.

Comparing these two client categories provides an opportunity to analyse the differences in ability to achieve the activation policy.

By “*theoretical*” I refer to the street-level bureaucracy theory, which will be presented on the following pages. As will be illuminated this theory is believed to be relevant for a wide range of agencies, professions and clients—but where comparisons have had little focus. By conducting a systematic comparison between clients that most likely have differing abilities to achieve the activation policy, there is an opportunity to develop and contribute to the theory of street-level bureaucracy by focusing both on similarities and distinctions related to consequences of being in the client position.

The Street-level bureaucracy theory

A relevant theoretical approach used to analyse the problems raised above is the theory of street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky 1977, 1980). I will first argue why and present its basic content. Then I will explore in more detail its content as linked to the problems raised. I will then present literature that is explicitly related to the street-level bureaucracy tradition, and will also refer to literature that can be of relevance even if they are not explicitly stated as being relevant to such a tradition.

The theory of street-level bureaucracy appears to be relevant to this work as it is an organisation theory that focuses on the front-line workers (c.f Solheim 1992; Eriksen 2001) of the welfare state and their relationships with their clients. According to Lipsky, the street-level bureaucrats are professionals and semi-professionals, found in a variety of occupations. Street-level bureaucracies are important in the sense that they have a political meaning, as they decide if and in what form clients receive public services. This is linked to the fact that street-level bureaucrats use administrative and professional methods of discretion in relation to vague public policies (Lipsky 1980; see also Adler and Asquith 1981). Discretion involves

²⁸ Cf. Stortingsmelding nr. 6 (2002-2003); Stortingsmelding nr. 9 (2006-2007).

the ability to reason on what to do in specific cases, and is tied to “rules of action”, views on rationality and normative expectations (cf. Grimen and Molander 2008).

A major aspect of Lipsky’s theory is the relationship between the conditions of work for street-level bureaucrats and their development of coping strategies. The working conditions are characterised by a problematic resources situation, unclear goals and strained relationships with clients. In response, street-level bureaucrats tend to develop coping strategies such as rationing of services and modifications of work and clients (Lipsky 1980²⁹). The consequence of this is that the coping strategies shape the way the street-level bureaucrats work with their clients and thus implement public policies. I turn now to a theoretical presentation related to the four research elements.

Client experiences

The young single mothers and the unemployed youth will be analysed as clients at the local street-level bureaucracies by focusing on their experiences in the position as clients. By *experience* I mean the knowledge that is gained from what one has observed, encountered or undergone in a specific position³⁰. The experience of the young clients is something which will grow out of their contact with one or more of the three street-level bureaucracies studied here. Etymologically the concept of *client* means someone seeking protection by someone powerful, and has also been used to describe someone who is receiving services from welfare bureaucracies³¹. According to Lipsky the concept of client is not only a descriptive one that focuses on having a relationship to a welfare agency. Moreover, the client concept involves the social construction of individuals by the bureaucrats. In Lipsky’s own words:

The processing of *people* into *clients*, assigning them to categories for treatment by bureaucrats, and treating them in terms of those categories is a social process (Lipsky 1980:59).

What do we know from the literature about client experiences? According to Lipsky clients are understood as being in a *nonvoluntary* position (Lipsky 1980). This applies obviously to situations where there is a relationship between the client and coercive institutions like the police or prisons. In her work on taxation Braithewaite states that some individuals defy authority “because we don’t like how the authority is operating or because we object to the

²⁹ Cf. also the 30th anniversary edition of the book (Lipsky 2010).

³⁰ This understanding of “experience” is close to the etymological meaning of this concept. Source: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/experienced>. Reading date: August 1, 2011.

³¹ Source: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/client>. Reading date: August 1, 2011.

reach of its power” (Braithwaite 2009:31). This is an example of how formal relationships between authorities and clients sometimes are experienced as a nonvoluntary position.

Of more direct relevance to this work are situations where the clients are linked to welfare agencies with less coercive properties than police departments, prisons and tax authorities. If the client has a low income and few or no alternatives other than to seek help at welfare agencies that may provide him with monetary support, the client may also be in a nonvoluntary position as his actions may seem forced upon him (Lipsky 1980:54). If the client then experiences the position as nonvoluntary it is likely that this will have an influence on his experience in a negative way, since he has done something which he would rather seen undone.

Another major type of client experience underlined by Lipsky (1980) and others is that clients may see themselves as being *stigmatised*. Lipsky appears to be primarily focused on how street-level bureaucracies may produce stigmatisation in its clients. This is done by labelling, where clients are assigned to negative categories³².

Furthermore, certain projects and programmes may have stigmatising effects upon clients, especially those that may be linked to social deviance, dependency, poverty and false accusations (Lipsky 1980; Spicker 1984; Higgins 1978; Fraser and Gordon 1994). Stigmatisation can occur in relationships between clients and agencies of the welfare state, and between clients and the community. According to Link and Phelan (2001), stigmatisation arises from the following elements: labelling, stereotyping, distinction between “them” and “us”, status loss and discrimination as well as the exercise of power. Power may be exercised by dominant social groups in the society as well as by agencies and professions of the welfare state (Sumner 1994). Even if categories of clients may be stigmatised it is likely to think that only a segment of them will experience that position as a client in such a way. Page use the concept of “felt stigma” to analyse a situation where certain individuals (like clients) “interpret all their life experiences within a stigma framework” (Page 1988:14). Basically, this occurs if the individuals incorporate negative definitions of a social position as part of their experience with such a position (Turner et al. 1987; Davido, Major and Crocker 2000). Individuals who recognise that they are stigmatised and experience this as a personal burden of shame tend to develop strategies to hide their stigma. This may be done through

³² Lipsky mentions categories like “criminal”, “welfare mother” and “slow learner” as examples of stigmatic categories (Lipsky 1980:68).

information control, where one tries either to pass as somebody else or cover one's stigmatised position (Goffman 1963; Page 1988).

It is also possible that clients will have positive experiences as clients. Even if certain social positions are seen as deviant by some members of society, persons belonging to subcultures may see their positions as normal and accepted—within certain social milieus. Subcultures may relate to youth gangs (Cohen 1955; Bloch and Niederhoffer 1958; Willis 1977; Bjørge and Carlsson 1999; Carlsson 2005; Sandberg and Pedersen 2010) and families (Jonsson 1969). This means that some clients may have other norms than the rest of society and thus be protected against denunciation and stigmatisation. Braithewaite (2009) also points at how belonging to subcultures (“social enclaves”) shapes certain norms and experiences towards authorities that protect clients from critical and negative judgments connected to aspects of their relationship with such authorities. Phenomena like nonvoluntariness client position, felt stigma and subcultures might produce both procedural and material consequences for clients.

Street-level implementation

Implementation means how a certain state policy is carried out in a specific way and what kind of effect it has (Winter 2003). The street-level bureaucrats perform the implementation of the activation policy in a power-relationship with their clients. Investigating how street-level bureaucrats implement policy involves focusing upon how they classify clients, what types of arrangements or programmes the clients are linked to and what kind of consequences this has on the individual client (Meyers and Vorsanger 2003; Winter 2003).

The literature on street-level bureaucracy suggests various perspectives on how such bureaucracies implement³³ policy.

Creaming. Creaming is one type of coping strategy whereby street-level bureaucrats choose to work with those clients (out of the total client population) that are seen as being able to succeed according to success criteria of the welfare bureaucracies (Lipsky 1980). For instance, many clients will be in need of work, but creaming takes place when those who are most easily able to gain work are given priority (Marston and McDonald 2006; Thorèn 2008).

³³ Since Lipsky (1980) was focused on the street-level bureaucrats he pointed at *coping* behavior or coping strategies. In his book from 1980 Lipsky mentions three major forms of coping behavior/strategies: the rationing of services; controlling clients and the work situation; and the client-processing mentality (modifications of conceptions of work and clients). I find some of these most relevant in relation to the problem statement and see them as ways to implement policy towards clients.

Creaming can also be related to “personal goals” among street-level bureaucrats. An example of this is when clients who are perceived as being able to change their lives or have potential for success are given priority because street-level bureaucrats believe that this also represents a success for them (Guttormsen and Høigaard 1977). Another variant of creaming is when those clients seen as most in need or deserving public support are negatively prioritised (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). The criteria for deciding who is in need or deserving may be based upon personal moral judgments by the street-level bureaucrat (Terum 1997). Essentially, creaming means that there is a positive and informal discrimination of some clients.

Categorisation. Implementing policy involves the categorisation of the client (Prottas 1979). Lipsky (1980) stated that in order to work with clients street-level bureaucracies assign the client to bureaucratic and professional categories (cf. also Sumner 1994). This may be necessary in order to secure help for the client; one must fit with the category that provides help (Pihl 2002). However, categorisation is also an informal coping strategy making it easier for the street-level bureaucrats to manage their work with clients (Lipsky 1980). The dilemma connected to categorisation of clients is that it represents a simplification, sometimes also called stereotypes, of the individual client. This may foster prejudicial judgments of the client, for instance by overlooking the specific needs, wishes and potentials of the individual with whom the street-level bureaucrat is working (Thorèn 2008). Thorèn also notes that clients can be categorised according to normative concepts, including distinguishing between “serious” and “unserious” clients. The former categorisation represents those who are seen as motivated to find work and be self-sufficient, and the latter those perceived as representing the opposite (Thorèn 2008).

Stigmatisation. The implementation of policy may also lead to stigmatisation of the client. This can sometimes be seen as a by-product of the categorisation, when this involves giving clients a negative label, or something that occurs when clients are linked to programmes that underline them as being in a deviant social position—such as long-term unemployed, “poor” or greatly dependent upon relief from the state (Lipsky 1980; Spicker 1984). Stigmatisation can also arise because of actions of the implementing agency. Certain welfare state agencies implement particularistic and means-tested programmes, which may produce stigmatisation as such programmes reveal deviance from common societal norms (Titmuss 1968). Certain agencies also may be labelled by society as agencies for the deviants in society, which then indirectly contributes to stigmatisation of clients through the implementation process (Spicker 1984). Another perspective is that bureaucratic

stigmatisation may be linked to the relationship between the specific street-level bureaucrat and the client. Colton et al. (1997) stress the importance of employing an interactional perspective in analysing the relationship between stigma and services delivered by the welfare state. This means to investigate the personal relationship between clients and bureaucrats, but also to focus on the “systemic” aspects, for example, how the welfare state personnel play an important role, as they may influence how policies are experienced by the clients. Universal services can be experienced as stigmatising, and selective services non-stigmatising depending on how the street-level bureaucrat acts vis a vis the client (cf. also Lipsky 1980).

Rubber stamping. Rubber stamping is also a coping strategy that sheds light on how policy is implemented towards clients. This refers to street-level bureaucrats adopting the judgment of clients produced by other street-level bureaucrats through their previous decisions and written reports (Lipsky 1980). Such judgments may contain biases and labels that affect the actions of street-level bureaucrats. The practice of rubber stamping represents a form of secondary categorisation that runs the risk of simplifying and stereotyping the actual client and thus reduces the probability of a broad assessment of the client.

Referrals. Lipsky (1980) noted that a striking feature of policy implementation is referrals of clients between agencies. A specific agency can be seen as the entry point into the welfare state system, but in order to render effective help the individual sometimes ought to be transferred to other agencies. In this study referrals of clients can take place between the Social Welfare Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office, but also between these and special institutions. Lipsky points at the dualism of referrals. Such a practice can be seen as a sound way to help the individual client, when the specific needs are identified and the receiving agency provides the necessary resources to help the client. On the other hand, the practice of referrals can sometimes be better understood in accordance with the natural perspective on organisations (Scott and Davis 2007), namely when a referral is an informal coping strategy for the street-level bureaucrats as a way to ease a heavy work load. Then, referrals may not be for the betterment of the client. The outcome of being referred is rather uncertain, and Lipsky stated that “referral is a way of dealing with clients without really dealing with them” (Lipsky 1980:132). Marston and McDonald (2006), in their analysis of employment services in Australia, pointed at the potential conflict between the specific client needs and the need by agencies to adjust to governmental goals and expectations when referring clients to work programmes. Success may be seen as producing relatively high

numbers of clients linked to work programmes, but at the same time individual needs for specific guidance and help in the mediation process are overlooked. Similar findings are reported by Thorèn (2008) in her analysis of activation practices in Sweden. Referrals of social assistance clients by social workers to local activation programmes often took the shape of “mass referrals” and not as “individually tailored” referrals (Thoren 2008:89). This informal practice was explained by organisational factors, such as response to work-load problems and adjustment to perceived demands from management and local service boards. Referrals of clients with strong barriers to be overcome for work can also be a defeat if the receiving agency is characterised by creaming practices (Thorèn 2008). Slettebø (2000) stated that not all clients are able to perform work, a point that seems of relevance in an analysis of referrals.

It should be remembered also that street-level bureaucracies have the power to refer clients, something that makes it crucial to investigate how referrals are done and what the consequences are for the clients.

Psychological costs. According to Lipsky (1980), street-level bureaucracies may inflict psychological costs on the clients in the implementation process. In a variety of forms this means to put the client in a situation that represents “pressures and indignities” (Lipsky 1980:94), such as making clients talk about shameful matters, make them perform difficult decisions of a relational character and expose them to other people in waiting rooms as a consequence of the queuing system of bureaucracies. One context for the creation of psychological costs is the interaction between the client and the street-level worker, especially in agencies of the welfare state which administer particularistic and means-tested programmes, characterised by unclear rules with regard to access and information required from the client (Schaffer and Huang 1975; Bleiklie, Dahl Jacobsen and Thorsvik 1997).

The elements of the street-level bureaucracy theory presented above point at both procedural and material consequences for clients.

The judgment of clients by local people

The importance of including how local people judge the clients in the analysis is that their judgments might illuminate, first and foremost, aspects of procedural consequences for the clients. This might occur if clients perceive local people as social forces whom they believe either approve or disapprove of their client position.

“People locally” are meant as individuals who work in mainstream industries or hold other types of occupations, and are seen as working class and middle class³⁴. They are not clients themselves with the local street-level bureaucracies, neither do they work at any of the local bureaucracies studied here. They are representatives of the local community and they will be in the position of judging the young clients according to certain criteria. Since these “people” are working it is likely that young clients will be judged according to dimensions such work ethic, willpower and conduct of life. These dimensions seem likely to be focused upon as being employed is normal for these local people, and to be able to achieve an occupation and keep it demands a certain degree of willpower and a conduct of life that does not contradict with being integrated in the labour market. At the outset, it is likely to think that local people’s perception of work may influence how they judge the two client categories.

³⁴ It is necessary to explain the use of the concept of class in this work. Class is used in different ways, and it is reasonable to state that, for instance, Marx and Weber have used the concept in different meanings (cf. Giddens 1981; Wright 1997). For Marx the main point of departure was the location of individuals in the position of production, stressing an economic definition of the concept. Marxian thought (cf. Marx 1976; Wright 1997) deals with topics such as class structure, class formation, class consciousness and class struggle. For Weber it was not necessary to let the economic aspects be the determinant in understanding classes, since he stressed the importance of skills and income privileges which give human beings in different classes different life chances (Weber 1964; cf. Wright 1997). In Weber’s analysis the manual working class, the petty bourgeoisie, property-less white-collar workers (who do not own their own means of production, but who perform “office” work—in contrast to manual industrial work), the privileged (by means of education and/or property) were the central classes (cf. Giddens 1981). I will argue that differences between classes concerning economic resources, values and norms, forms of knowledge and cognitive frames are essential aspects concerning the concept of class. Giddens (1981) has suggested that classes should be seen as an aggregation of individuals, thus restricting the concept of class—in its core meaning—to imply inequalities connected to positions in the production system and/or the society (cf. also Weber 1964). I perceive the working class and the middle class as being made up of aggregates of people who share a similar position in society, and the respondents from the two classes may hold different forms of understandings of the young users of services. In this work, *the working class* is mainly made up of those who perform manual work in the predominant industries in their communities such as the fish industry in “the Fjord” and the shipbuilding industry in “the Bay”. The primary expectation concerning the working class in these communities is that there may be an advocate of the norms that are connected to the industries, and thus is inclined to judge the young clients of public services in that context. The concept of *the middle class* is in this work associated with a Weberian perspective, where it is seen in relation to the concept of market capacity. For the middle class this is defined by educational or technical qualifications, which directs it towards certain life chances and lifestyles (cf. Wacquant 1991). In this work the middle class respondents have education at college or university levels, and some of them are in typical professions or semi-professions. Being middle class implies to value the pursuit of higher education and becoming a professional—and one will experience possibilities for promotions (cf. Mills 1951; Giddens 1981), thus being preoccupied with making progress in life. This orientation implies looking beyond the limitations of a particular community; to get an education one often has to move away from the community and most educations mean broadening the horizons of the students. The middle class may be seen as advocates of supra-local values. Achieving higher education implies a challenge to the way one reasons about the knowledge of social phenomena, as academic virtue (at its best) is to cherish the sound doubt. It is expected that the norms and orientations of the middle class will influence how the middle class respondents in the two communities judge the young clients.

Work ethic

This concept is linked to what is commonly known as the Protestant work ethic (cf. Weber 2001). This means to upgrade the value of physical work, and the poor as well as the rich are expected to conform to the Protestant work ethic. Weber argued that the rise of Protestantism, especially Calvinism, promoted the development of a capitalist economy. The basic idea is that the belief in predestination and “the select” made people supporting such ideas look for worldly signs of being among “the exclusive”. Achieving success in worldly endeavours was regarded as such tokens. The basic “method” was working hard, moving to a more economically rewarding occupation if possible, and reinvesting the capital in new enterprises instead of using it for luxurious consumption. If it is possible to talk of “divides” created by Calvinism, it would probably be in two dimensions: between those who work hard and/or reinvest and those who are idle or unemployed, including between those who work hard and reinvest and those who are in the position to live like a leisure class (cf. Veblen 1976) i.e., off the work of others.

The core meaning of the work ethic is to assign a certain *meaning* to work; this has a value in itself. According to Rose (1985) and Hill, the basic features of the Protestant work ethic were “diligence, punctuality, deferment of gratification, and primacy of the work domain” (Hill 1992, 1996:6).

To work hard became the desired ends and means, and *religious* belief became an essential motive for such a disposition.

It is important to recognise the “*secularisation*” of the work ethic, in that a strong work ethic does not necessarily have to be fuelled by religious motives (cf. Hassall et al. 2005; Mudrack 1997). Work ethic emphasising properties such as diligence and punctuality became important factors supporting the capitalist mode of production, and the practical organisation of the production in factories. Working hard could keep the workers away from severe forms of poverty. *To support the work ethic bought oneself respect, and idleness and laziness were seen as shameful and surrounded by contempt* (cf. Hill 1992, 1996). Such attitudes are recognised by some writers to be valid also in present times (cf. Heaven 1991; Furnham 1985; Tang and Smith-Brandon 2001).

According to Hill (1992, 1996) and Yankelovich and Harmon (1988), the work ethic of the present day has partly *changed*, due to the growth of white-collar jobs. The pain and boredom associated with certain forms of industrial work is not likely to be experienced likewise in

white-collar jobs, which focus upon skills, discretion, interest and autonomy. Herman (2002) and Izzo (2001) underline that the work ethic is now *conditional*. Supporting a work ethic seems to be dependent upon the content of the work (if it meets the worker's interest, talent and need for growth), the duration of work (for instance, working hard in combination with early retirement) and the organisation of work (being able to work hard and still live a family life).

How is the concept of the work ethic used in this work? I mean by the work ethic-concept the ability to regard work as a value in of itself and including diligence and punctuality. On the other hand, it must be recognised that individuals may support or (want to) express their work ethic in different ways; for instance in the shape of a blue-collar and a white-collar divide. The specific focus is on the *local constructions* concerning the content, definition and possibilities for living up to the *secular* work ethic. The prevalence of a secular work ethic may promote a certain *cognitive frame* for judging human beings that are not employed.

Willpower

The question of willpower is related to the distinction between *values* and *norms* with regard to decisions performed by the individual. The individual is considered to be rational in the sense that he is able to reflect upon the actions taken, and to evaluate different types of norms with regard to realisation of his values. This means that strong will is linked to the idea that values are pursued through legitimate and "good" actions directed by the right norms. An example would be that achieving a certain standard of living is based upon paid work.

The weak will rises when the individual is directed by the temptation to perform bad actions based upon bad and illegitimate norms, in his pursuit to achieve good or accepted values. The problem of the weak will is the *replacement* of good norms and actions by bad ones. The weak will is something that the individual is supposed to avoid, but also something one may be accused of representing, by others (cf. the Greek philosopher Aristotle 1999). The importance of this in this context that people locally will most likely either sanction young clients that they "know" are unwilling to work, or accuse some of these young clients of representing a weak will; in the sense that they would rather live on financial support by the state than work in the local working life.

Conduct of Life

It is a possibility that young clients will be judged by additional traits than that of just being a client. This may be related to questions of sexuality and marriage. The question of sexuality and marriage is in this study relevant with regard to the single mothers. According to Falk (2001) the unmarried mother has been stigmatised since in the past this was seen as a form of social deviance that opposed central values in society. Page (1988), writing about the situation for single mothers in Great Britain during the 1500s, may be seen as an illustration of the past power of Christianity and the Church. In those times, the Christian condemnation of the unmarried mother, on moral grounds, was strong and institutionalised (by the Church courts). The condemnation by the Church was founded on the belief that the unmarried mother was the responsible party of the situation, that her situation was morally wrong (sexual relations outside marriage) and that her conduct offended the institution of the family. Two questions are of relevance with regard to this work. Is there today (in the communities studied) religious denunciation of single mothers related to sexuality and being unmarried? Is the position as a single mother something that influences how people locally judge their position as a client with the local street-level bureaucracies?

I have above outlined what I recognise as relevant dimensions regarding the judgment of clients by people living in their community. Two major types of judgments seem likely. If clients are seen as opposing the norms that are tied to the work ethic, the willpower and conduct of life—then stigmatisation of the client can occur. On the other hand, if clients behave in conjunction with these norms it is more likely that they will be judged positively and be socially accepted.

Stigmatisation – Social acceptance

Goffman pointed to three³⁵ different forms of stigma³⁶, which are of relevance here. The first one was related to visible and bodily wounds, which represented a stigma since they were seen as *repulsive* to others. A second form was when individuals are seen as displaying a “weak character”. This is categories of people who are stigmatised either because of a provocative lifestyle (vagabonds, drug addicts), or because they intimidate others (criminals, ex-prisoners, mentally disturbed) or because they are not seen as contributing to society (notorious unemployed). A third one was the “tribal” form, which meant that the individual is stigmatised, not because of individual properties, but because he is associated with a collective level, such as race, nation or religion.

An important feature of stigmatisation is the presumed reasons for being in the stigmatised position.

It must also be noted that varying degrees of blame attach to the types of stigma outlined by Goffman. In general, those with physical or tribal stigmas are granted a measure of social acceptance because they are not considered to be personally responsible for their “failing” (Page 1988:6).

This statement points to some situations where the individual has no influence on his condition, such as a physical handicap. The “normals” may, of course, reject interacting with a person with such properties, but the individual cannot be blamed for this situation. Those who are seen as having a “weak will” may be looked upon by the others as being responsible for the situation, since their situation could have been different, had they made other decisions. This “theory” presumes the individual possesses a great amount of free will, and not greatly restricted by social or structural forces. Page points to another important feature

³⁵ An additional typology to the forms of stigma offered by Goffman might be Jones et al. (1984) classification of *aspects* of the phenomenon of stigma. The aspects are: *concealability* (whether the stigma is hidden or visible); *course* (the consequences the stigma has on the individual’s social relations); *disruptiveness* (how the stigmatising condition affects the communication process); *aesthetic qualities* (whether physical stigmas are seen as repulsive by others); *origin* (what is seen as the reason for having a stigmatised identity); and finally *peril* (whether others see it as dangerous to interact with a person with a certain stigma, such as a person with AIDS/HIV).

³⁶ Stigma is a concept that over the years has been employed in a variety of academic fields. The origin of the concept may be traced back to the ancient civilisation of Greece and Christian mysticism. According to Falk (2001) the Greeks used stigma, or physical branding, to show clearly who were prisoners of war, slaves or otherwise in an *inferior social position*. According to Christian mysticism some persons allegedly experienced *stigmata*, which are bodily wounds resembling those of the crucified Christ. Two things are of importance in connection with the elder meaning of stigma. First, it states something about a person’s negative status. Then it is associated with visible and bodily evidence of such a status. The use of the concept has changed, as today it refers to an inferior position and to censure, but is no longer solely related to visible proof of a certain social status. Some of those being stigmatised experience a negative identity and will be seen as deviants. By and large, being stigmatised implies belonging to a minority in society (Falk 2001).

connected to the three forms of stigma—the degree of hostility with which stigmatised persons are met. He argues that conduct (“weak will”) and tribal stigmas more often than physical stigmas are surrounded by hostility from others³⁷ (Page 1988:11).

Neuberg, Smith and Asher (2000) stress that members of *social groups* tend to stigmatise *former* members of an in-group, as well as members of *different* social groups. In-group members that deviate from the norms of the group because they are unable or unwilling to reciprocate, are defined as being treacherous or engaged in counter-socialization, and thus tend to become stigmatised. This is because the “deviants” challenge or *threaten* the values and norms of the group.

As a result people tend to stigmatise members of other groups, due in part to mistrust between groups, because of a lack of interactional contact or reciprocity, and in part because one group may be seen as a competitor in the eyes of another group.

The “competition” may relate to a resource like work, but the conflict between groups may also appear because of conflicting norms on how to earn a living, cf. Hasenfeld and Rafferty (1989)³⁸. People do this mainly by way of the market, while some rely heavily, for shorter or longer periods of time, on monetary support from the state—or are seen as doing this.

Biernat and Dovidio (2002) address the *cognitive* aspect of stigmatization when they discuss the link between stereotypes and stigma. They believe that stereotypes are heavily linked to the tribal form (cf. Goffman 1963), but may also apply to the stigmas of the “weak will”. Stereotypes arise because of groupiness, role division, shared physical characteristics and the search for causes of the stigmatised attribute. Groupiness refers to a tendency to define every individual who is part of a stigmatised *category* as possessing similar properties. Role division provides the observer with a view of what people in certain roles normally do or are capable. For instance, if *young* persons, by and large, pursue an educational career or have a job, then the observer may think that this is what all *young* persons are able to do. A consequence of this might be that those who do not act according to what is perceived as normal can be stigmatised as an effect of the comparison.

³⁷ According to Page, physical stigmas seem to be surrounded by inhibition and over-sympathetic reactions (Page 1988:13).

³⁸ Hasenfeld and Rafferty (1989) have studied attitudes toward the welfare state in the U.S. Their analysis was linked to types of welfare programmes (contributory versus means-tested), dominant social ideologies (economic individualism/work ethic versus social equality/collective responsibility) and the informants’ class position, which determines their self-interest and degree of economic vulnerability. A major finding was that class positions, self-interest and ideological “affiliation” determined the type and degree of support of the welfare state.

Biernat and Dovidio (2000) address the consequences of stereotypes, and suggest that they influence how we think (information processing), feel (attitudes and prejudice), and act towards people (discrimination). The first consequence points to the *cognitive* aspect, with focus on "... cognitive structures that influence how information about others is encoded, stored and retrieved" (Biernat and Dovidio 2000:96). Those who stigmatise others by way of stereotypes may be seen as actors that have limited information on the individuals they stigmatise.

Stereotypes can provide a cognitive basis for prejudice against individuals perceived as sharing common traits within a stigmatised category. Prejudice implies negative sentiments, and is most likely caused by a prevalent view of *endurance* of the stigmatised attribute in the form of certain *constant* characteristics (Brigham 1971).

Local frames

Next, I will first define what I mean by the concept of community. Then I will move on to elaborate on how local frames can influence client experiences, judgments of clients and how the activation policy is implemented.

The concept of *community* holds different meanings. In this work, its use is closely linked to the concept of a local context, which later in this work will be portrayed as the local communities of "the Fjord" and "the Bay". Almgren (1992) points to the following meanings of the concept, which are relevant to this work: the focus upon social interaction among people; that people in a community share one or more ties, as well as an area context. In this work, the community concept means a delineated geographical area (formally and functionally), the types of occupations and industrial structures specific to a certain community, the possibility for the prevalence of local norms related to dominant industries which might provide normative and cognitive lenses to the members of the community, and as frames for the exercise of social control as well as implementation of the activation policy. Also in this work, communities represent local frames for the judgment of certain social positions, but it is not taken for granted that community implies that *all* members of it share the same norms and social consciousness.

The following aspects of local communities are relevant for this work.

The local labour market

According to Sunley, Martin and Nativel, local labour markets vary when they are compared and “policy outcome are shaped in large by local circumstances” (Sunley et al. 2006:103). The first aspect to take into consideration with regard to the local labour market is what kind of jobs are available or possible for clients to obtain. Is the repertoire of jobs narrow or wide? This is of relevance for the variables the street-level bureaucrats are facing when they are ready to implement the activation policy in a local context. This question is also clearly relevant for the clients as it points at the possibilities for showing that one is willing to work and able to endure it. Analysing the local labour market in a community should also take into consideration the possibilities for acceptable commuting distance to work, since alternative types of jobs might be found in neighbouring communities (Sunley et al 2006; Gordon 1999). This means examining whether a community is located within a functional region or not.

Norms related to work and conduct of life

If communities vary in industrial structures and range of occupations³⁹, perhaps they also vary with regard to central norms relating to work and conduct of life. When examining local frames it seems important to elaborate on this question. Are there in a community specific norms related to work and the work ethic, for instance that the members of the community, by and large, should accept the jobs found locally, and thus express the work ethic in a particular way? At the outset I suggest it is likely that a strong and secular work ethic typically will be identified in communities characterised by being one-sided with regard to dominant industries and where the working class has a central position. In Norway, there are certain communities that are classified as one-sided industrial places (cf. Mariussen, Karlsen and Andersen 1996; Hansen and Selstad 1999).

Does a specific community represent special norms with regard to sexuality and marriage? This seems of relevance in connection to single mothers, since they live in a broken relationship. Of importance here is pietism, which traditionally has been critical or even condemning towards sexual relations outside of marriage. This religious direction has historically had core geographical areas, as it has had a relatively strong footing especially in coastal areas of southern and western Norway (cf. Seland 2006), and also in some parts of northern Norway (cf. Aadnanes 1986).

³⁹ Cf. for instance Seierstad (1995) and Isaksen and Spilling (1996) who show that certain industries are so geographically concentrated that they represent industrial clusters.

The importance of examining these types of normative questions is because they might become relevant when young clients are judged locally, with regard to the experiences of the clients, and perhaps also concerning how the street-level bureaucrats form opinions about the clients as part of the implementation of the activation policy.

Properties of local street-level bureaucracies

As part of examining the local context and the frames for implementing the activation policy, it seems of relevance to investigate possible traits of street-level bureaucracies in small communities⁴⁰. Some studies have focused on characteristics of implementing social work in small communities that are relevant to this study. One aspect is that social work in small communities is carried out by agencies that have relatively few persons employed, the agencies face external turnover among their personnel to a high degree and it is difficult to recruit professional social workers (Walle 1991; Hovik and Myrvold 2001; Lichtwarck and Clifford 1996; Haugland 2000). A second aspect is the possible consequences related to the aspects mentioned above. One possible consequence is that the relationship between the street-level bureaucrat and the client may be “too close”, in the sense that the official has a “surplus knowledge” of the client that implies prejudices when working with the client. This type of consequence is, for instance, reported by Haugland (2000).

A second consequence is outlined by Lichtwarck and Clifford (1996). In their analysis of Social Welfare Offices in small Norwegian communities, they summed up their findings by creating three ideal typed offices. These offices are named “the legalised Social Welfare Office”, “the local community-oriented Social Welfare Office”, and “the profession-less Social Welfare Office”⁴¹. In the first type of office, laws and professional judgments predominate, and local norms are seen as unwanted or irrelevant for decision making. In the two latter offices, legitimate decisions with regard to clients are seen as related to central norms in the community. An office that is seen as “profession-less” means that it lacks professional educated social workers (i.e. those with a minimum of three years of college and a degree in social work). This indicates that the latter offices may be penetrated by local norms, and not by professional and/or organisational ones. Similar findings, i.e. the impact of

⁴⁰ The term “small communities” refers to size, meaning population figures in a municipality (the political-administrative entity which Statistic Norway relates to when producing such population figures). By “small” I shall in this work indicate municipalities/communities with less than 7000 inhabitants, which figure corresponds to the size of the communities studied here (cf. chapter three).

⁴¹ The text is in Norwegian, and the Norwegian terms the authors use are: Det ”legaliserte” sosialkontor, Det ”lokalsamfunnsorienterte” sosialkontor og Det ”profesjonsløse” sosialkontor (Lichtwarck and Clifford 1996:78-91).

local norms with regard to decision making in social work agencies, are reported by Ronnby (1995, 1997).

Figure 1.1: Major themes in the reviewed literature

The National Policy context	The local context	Client experiences	Street-level implementation	The judgment of clients by people locally
<p>Governmentality/Bio-power (the tendency of the state to steer and change individual behaviour in fields of welfare)</p> <p>The activation policy (financial support is surrounded by demands towards the clients in relation to work and/or education)</p> <p>Uncertain policy outcomes (“real” empowerment vs. humiliation, stigmatization, dependency)</p>	<p>The local labour market (the repertoire of jobs in the community and regional characteristics)</p> <p>Local norms (connected to work, education and conduct of life)</p> <p>Properties of local street level bureaucracies (small-large agencies, relations to clients, autonomous and professional bureaucracies vs. bureaucracies embedded in/penetrated by local norms)</p>	<p>Main elements in experience (knowledge gained from what one has observed, encountered, undergone in the client position)</p> <p>Main forms of client experiences:</p> <p>Non-voluntary client position (formal and structural)</p> <p>Stigmatisation (felt stigma in connection with relations to street-level bureaucracies and the community)</p> <p>Acceptance of client position (in relation to subcultures/“social enclaves”)</p> <p>What experiences are related to: (own values and norms in relation to work, education and conduct of life, relations to the local labour market, social relations)</p>	<p>Main elements in implementation (the classification of clients, type of arrangements/programmes clients are linked to, consequences for clients)</p> <p>Main forms of implementation: (creaming, categorization, stigmatization, rubber stamping, referrals, psychological costs)</p> <p>What implementation is related to: (Own values and norms in relation to work, education and conduct of life. Relations to the community/main industrial cultures. Educational/professional background, traits of the organization/work conditions)</p>	<p>Main elements in judgments (evaluations related to work ethic, will power, conduct of life)</p> <p>Main types of client judgments: (stigmatization vs. social acceptance)</p> <p>What judgments are related to: (Own values and norms related to work, education and conduct of life. Relations to the local labour market. Own professional/educational background – type and level. Knowledge on clients)</p>

Conclusion: the profile of the study and a model of analysis

In this concluding section, I will address at the study's profile, particularly in what way it has a potential for contributing to our understanding of street-level bureaucracy, and present a model of analysis.

The profile of this study

Qualitative research

The main method in this study is qualitative interviews with street-level bureaucrats, the young clients and people locally. The model of analysis presented below implies only theoretical "building blocks", issues to be aware of in the analysis. Qualitative interviews provide the possibility to reveal more factors in relation to the problems addressed than what develops from previous research and theories. As a result, there is potential for developing our understanding of the functioning of street-level bureaucracies by employing this type of methodology.

Combining Governmentality and Street-level bureaucracy theory

The main focus in street-level bureaucracy studies seems to pay special attention on the street-level bureaucrats as such⁴². By examining the conditions of work, one has tried to analyse how these influence the production of coping strategies. This is not a main focus in this study. The interest lies rather in analyzing how the coping strategies can be seen as forms of implementation practices and how this produces consequences for the clients with whom the street-level bureaucrats are working. The original formulation of the governmentality theory was related to careful examination regarding what it meant for the individual to be steered by the state through disciplinary institutions. Such institutions apply power in order to correct human behaviour and the outcomes are uncertain. The theory of governmentality is helpful in order to specify the goal of this study as a street-level bureaucracy study: to primarily have a focus on the consequences for clients being processed by street-level bureaucracies⁴³.

In the beginning of this chapter, I presented central aspects of the Governmentality literature. This type of literature has partly been criticized for being focused on the state level and changes in the state's "mentality of rule" regarding steering of its subordinates. O'Malley et

⁴² This was the impression from reading the original release of the book and still is with regard to the 30th anniversary edition (Lipsky 1980/2010).

⁴³ The governmentality literature is also useful with regard to shedding a critical light on the policy formulations as such.

al. (1997) stress the need for detailed analysis of social relationships between a steering state and those steered and not being preoccupied with schematic and abstract descriptions of policies and “genealogies”(cf. also Gane and Johnston 1993; Dean 2002; Villadsen 2002). This seems to imply that parts of the governmentality literature to a certain extent have departed from Foucault’s original “program” stressing detailed analysis of the steering of the individual.

The street-level bureaucracy theory represents an approach that focuses on such relationships as mentioned above even if a “bias” towards the bureaucrats exists, and this work intends to study practical consequences of public policy for specific clients. The street-level bureaucracy approach, with its detailed and specific focus on implementation, has the potential to expand our perspective on how disciplinary institutions work, and how policy is turned into practice. However, the application of street-level bureaucracy perspectives has its limitations, which I shall address at the end of the chapter.

Comparison and contextualization: contribution to the field

When Lipsky formulated his street-level bureaucracy theory, the street-level bureaucrats were defined as “... (Those) who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion of their work. Typical street-level bureaucrats are teachers, police officers and other law enforcement personnel, social workers, judges, public lawyers and other court official and many other public officials who grant access to government programs and provide services within them” (Lipsky 1980:3). When Lipsky released his book in 1980, I believe it is reasonable to say his theory was seen as “promising” in the analysis of welfare bureaucracies. After 1980, writers have applied his theory on street-level bureaucracy, but in different ways. Some have concentrated on the fact that the theory is (still) seen as relevant and may explain observed empirical findings, without challenging the theory. Examples of this is the use of the theory on street-level bureaucracy to analyse: the perils of performing police work (Hill and Clawson 1988); the bureaucrats’ influence on the distribution of social services (Christensen 2001); the need of a street-level bureaucracy which is flexible in interpreting clients needs (Søholt 2001); the constraints on frontline workers in child welfare (Smith and Donovan 2003); and the impact of organizational forms (like “teams”) on the alleviation of personal stress for the individual street-level bureaucrat (Wells 1997). Others have criticised the theory either by pointing at potential for improvements, or by questioning basic assumptions underlying it. An example of the former is the study conducted by

Summers and Semrud-Clikeman (2000), who, for instance, found additional coping strategies to those initially described by Lipsky.

When Lipsky presented his theory, it was quite clear that the theory was meant to apply to a wide range of organizations and professions. Moore (1987) argues that this generality is in fact a weakness. The lack of systematic *comparisons* between different street-level bureaucracies lead to an exaggeration of the similarities and less focus on the differences between them (cf. also Anon 1981; Evans and Harris 2006; Evans 2010; Ellis 2011). Bleiklie's study of a housing agency and a psychiatric clinic in Norway, employing the theory of the street-level bureaucracy, demonstrates the fruitfulness of deliberate comparisons. He found the two organizations differ on crucial dimensions, like decision rules, and pointed to the fact that they might be seen as different service regimes (Bleiklie 1997).

This present study is designed in a way that offers comparisons between different categories of clients, three different welfare bureaucracies and two different communities.

The main perspective on *contextualising* street-level bureaucracy has been to focus on the national policy and organisational features. The national policy becomes an important context for the street-level bureaucrats, as the content of the policy and the character of decision rules has an impact on the degree and shape of discretion (Lipsky 1980). Furthermore, context seems to mean the effect of a bureaucratic and hierarchical organisation structure upon the street-level bureaucrat's performance. These structures imply constraints on the conditions of work, which contributes to the development of certain coping strategies (Lipsky 1980, 1991; see also Evans 2010). Thorèn (2008) provides an overview of typical contexts that have been a focus with regard to street-level bureaucracy studies: political preferences⁴⁴ (if the political preferences of political officials form the practices of street-level bureaucrats); management capacity⁴⁵ (managers' capacity to control and monitor the actions of street-level bureaucrats); organizational resources⁴⁶ (the impact of limited time, money and positions in the organization on street-level performance); policy objectives and organizational goals⁴⁷ (the role of vague, ambiguous and conflicting goals on street-level performance); normative

⁴⁴ Cf. for instance Winter (2001), Brodtkin (2006), Stranz (2007).

⁴⁵ Cf. for instance Brehm and Gates (2007), Riccucci (2005), Brodtkin (2006).

⁴⁶ Cf. for instance Brodtkin (1997), Meyers et al. (1998), Winter (2001).

⁴⁷ Cf. for instance Brodtkin (1997); Meyers et al. (1998); Lin (2000).

assumptions about policy targets⁴⁸ (whether common or general norms in the society at large influence on street-level implementation); and practice norms and collective beliefs⁴⁹ (focus on how professional norms, work customs, occupational cultures and “office cultures” shape street-level implementation) (cf. Thorèn 2008:27-32). Recent discourses (for instance in the UK) on the relationship between managers and street-level bureaucrats and the extent of discretionary decisions in social work under New Public Management illustrates that “context” directs our attention towards, more or less, internal features of public service organizations (cf. Evans 2010). Mainly then, “context” has, in the street-level bureaucracy literature, been linked to: policies formulated at state level; internal organisational traits of specific street-level bureaucracies; and general norms in society.

These types of contexts are important, but in this study, I intend to illuminate a subject matter that seems to have been overlooked in street-level bureaucracy studies: *how the local context of communities may have an impact on street-level bureaucracy and their clients*. The local context implies the structural properties of a community such as the local labour market, but also the normative judgments made by people living in the community and the possibility that local street-level bureaucracies are embedded in a local context.

A model of analysis

A model of analysis implies distinguishing between the dependent variable and the independent ones. The dependent variable is the phenomenon one seeks to explain or illuminate, and the independent ones are those that explain the independent one (cf. King et al. 1994). The model of analysis is a concentrated presentation of the variables in the study, and I have extracted from the literature linked to the research elements what I consider as the relevant variables for inclusion in the analysis.

The dependent variable

The dependent variable is: *What are the consequences for young single mothers and unemployed youth from being clients at local welfare bureaucracies?* This variable is illuminated by looking at elements theorised in the four research elements presented above; it does not solely rely on the findings related to the experiences of the young clients. From the literature, it is reasonable to hypothesise that the consequences for the clients are related to both material and procedural aspects. By material I mean whether the clients receive help or

⁴⁸ Cf. for instance Hasenfeld (2000); Handler and Hasenfeld (2007).

⁴⁹ Cf. for instance Sandfort (1999); Riccucci (2005); Lurie (2006).

not at the local welfare bureaucracies. Street-level phenomena, such as creaming and referrals, suggest that it is uncertain if specific clients receive help or not. By procedural I mean what are the consequences for clients of being attached to and processed by local street-level bureaucracies. From the literature it is uncertain if the client position is looked upon as voluntary or non-voluntary, and if the outcome of being a client is stigmatisation or (social) acceptance.

The independent variables

From the literature review and the formulated research elements, I have included four main independent variables: the activation policy, the local context, characteristics of the policy implementing street-level bureaucracies and client traits.

The activation policy

The activation policy can be seen as a form of an intended individualised bio-policy where intervention in the lives of clients is central. The influence upon clients is, however, uncertain: will tailor-made and successful help be rendered or does the use of power and demands related to contractualism⁵⁰ represent challenges for some clients in the sense that some of them do not easily fit within the national activation policy? To examine the effects of the activation policy implies to investigate into its basic mentality—what beliefs it carries concerning single mothers and unemployed youth, as well as examining conditions for “programmed” implementation towards the two client categories.

The local context

With regard to the local context, the local labour market is a central aspect. Is it so that some clients fit within the local repertoire of jobs and others do not, and are characteristics of the local labour market different when comparing the communities? Local norms in relation to work and conduct of life are also a crucial part of the local context: are structures and judgments of clients formed by local people that have an impact on the consequences for the young clients?

Focusing on the local context means to examine if and when it has an impact on clients and street-level bureaucracies, and when and if a top-down implementation of the national

⁵⁰ By contractualism I am referring to what Sol and Westerveld (2005) term “client contracts”. I am not primarily occupied with contracts as written and formal documents, rather that contractualism represents a reciprocal relationship between the state and the client.

activation policy possibly is unproblematic, meaning that the local context has no or little impact.

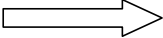
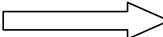
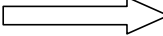
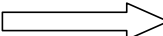
Characteristics of policy implementing street-level bureaucracies

From the literature review, it is likely that the following traits may have an impact on the consequences for the clients: the distinction between universal- and rights-oriented services and services characterised by means-testing and extensive use of discretionary types of decisions. A significant assumption is that the former type of services has as a consequence that the clients find themselves as normal and accepted, and the latter that they see themselves as deviant and stigmatised. The size of the local street-level bureaucracies in terms of number of employees might also have an impact upon clients, but this is uncertain. One might be heavily dependent upon the judgments of few and specific officials or that the internal turnover patterns among the personnel in larger bureaucracies result in either psychological costs or broader assessments of the clients. In addition, the work load and the adjacent coping strategies (creaming, categorisations, rubber stamping, referrals, stigmatisation and psychological costs) might favour some clients and disfavour others. Finally, the degree of professionalism in street-level bureaucracies may play a role. Organizations where the professionalism is high might produce other consequences for clients, compared to organizations where the institutional basis is of a different kind than formal knowledge represented by professions, i.e., where professionalism is low. Are some street-level bureaucracies, in fact, influenced by local frames and norms, and does this have a certain impact upon the clients?

Client traits

It is also a possibility that traits of the clients have an impact on the consequences of being a client. If clients are employed or in school this might affect which street-level bureaucracy they are attached to, what is needed to be done for them as seen from the perspective of the bureaucrats, and their abilities to live up to the activation policy. If they are, on the other hand, long-term unemployed this might imply that they are in need of services from quite a different group of street-level bureaucracies, and that they have barriers towards returning to work and living up to the activation policy. Also, their social networks in the community and their norms related to how to earn a living may influence what it means to them, in terms of consequences, to be in the client position.

Figure 1.2: A model of analysis

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	(Influence →)	DEPENDENT VARIABLE
The activation policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individualised bio-policy - Contractualism - Power-relations (between state and clients) 		Clients consequences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material (receiving help /not receiving help) - Procedural (Voluntarily-non-voluntarily/stigmatized-accepted)
The Local context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The local labour market (repertoire of jobs) - Local norms related to work and conduct of life (structures and judgment) 		
Characteristics of policy implementing street-level bureaucracy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Universalism (clear-cut rights) – particularism (means-testing, discretion) - Size (number of employees; degree of bureaucratization) - Work load and implementation forms - Degree of professionalism (Low – high) 		
Client traits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At work/studying - Long-term unemployed - Social networks in the community - Norms on how to earn a living 		

Four independent variables are included in the model of analysis: the activation policy; the local context; characteristics of policy implementing street-level bureaucracy; and client traits. In this study, I will examine conditions for when these four influences have greatest influence on the dependent variable, and if and how they amplify each other, as well as contradict each other. This will be done by comparing central traits of the activation policy with local frames, judgments on the clients, street-level implementation and traits of the clients and their experiences.

Analysis of discourse

In order to analyse the interview material I have chosen to apply insights from discourse theory, as I see this as relevant in this work.

Analysis of discourse is related to theories of knowledge and focuses on the construction of knowledge and truth in relation to specific matters. This is not “objective”, but rather an inquiry into what social actors hold as real knowledge and truth on themselves and others (cf. Foucault 1991b; Gee 2005; Vagli 2009; Winther-Jørgensen and Phillips 2010). Instead of a “positivist” position, analysis of discourse investigates how social actors create truth, realities, social identities and social relations through the social construction of reality (cf. Halliday 1994; Fairclough 1995). This type of understanding is inherent in one of Foucault’s descriptions of the discourse concept: “(discourses are)... practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972:49).

Social constructionism is linked to the “symbolic interactionism” direction in Sociology (cf. Mead 1934, Blumer 1966; Conrad and Schneider 1992). A significant point here is to recognize the subjective meaning which social actors associate with everyday life. This means that the perception of human beings is an interpretative affair where the interpretative content or potential differs between them. This is framed by the specific context of the matter, and “the object” is “... always the product of my own context-bound interpretive work” (Pfohl 1994:356). In other words, this means that discourses with regard to client experiences, judgments of clients by local people and street-level implementation forms are related to constructions of knowledge and truth.

This can be specified as: what kind of knowledge and truth on oneself and others lies behind client experiences? What kind of knowledge and truth about the clients lie behind how people locally judge young clients? What kind of knowledge and truth on the young clients lie behind the way street-level bureaucrats implement the activation policy? The social construction of

knowledge and truth may not just imply formation of cognition, but also be seen as something that influences the actions of social actors. This is known as the Thomas-theorem, which states that “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas and Thomas 1928: 571-572). The social construction of reality inherent in discourses then implies that it frames not only how social actors think, but also guides what they do.

In this section I suggest that the problem statement and the four research elements inherent in the model of analysis may be related to the concept of discourse. This means that client experiences, judgments of clients by local people, implementation of the activation policy towards the two client categories and traits of the local frames all contribute to illuminating what the consequences of being in the client position represents, and is related to discourses. Neumann (2001) states that discourse may be related to (how one understands) texts, actions, objects, subject-positions and institutions. This work is not related to discourse analysis, meaning a linguistic approach to texts, but rather is oriented towards detecting what kind of specific discourse is identifiable among the respondents—thus a focus on the analysis of discourse (Burr 1995; Winther-Jørgensen and Phillips 2010). When discourse is related to subject-positions and institutions, which seems of most relevance here, it involves, for instance, categorising and labelling of people in specific positions that serve the purpose of dividing a population into in- and out-groups, and focus on how subject-positions are “produced” and re-produced by their linkage to institutions and organisations (Neumann 2001; Winther-Jørgensen and Phillips 2010). This also implies that the respondents that constitute the empirical basis for this study are looked upon as bearers of discourse, and therefore the application of the discourse concept seems relevant in this work. Discourse may be oriented towards functioning of institutions and how one defines other human beings (Neumann 2001), but is also related to rather personal experiences (cf. Plumridge et al. 1997). At the outset, I then believe that discourses may have different statuses or be on different levels: they may be oriented towards aggregates of individuals and practices, but also may be very specific and personal. In my use of the concept of discourse, the common denominator will be to point at the social construction of truth and knowledge.

“Discourse” is related to the concept of power. Power implies social actors define the content of a discourse, frame a subject-matter and place human beings within it assigning certain properties to the individual. Power then means to portray the world in a specific way, for instance to describe something or someone as normal or deviant (Neumann 2001). On the

other hand, human beings may also exert discursive power in the form of channelling their resistance towards a specific discourse by placing themselves in alternative discourses (Neumann 2001; Winther-Jørgensen and Phillips 2010). The implication of this is that related to a specific subject-matter, more than one discourse may be identified, and a particular discourse might be “hegemonic” or more central than others (Winther-Jørgensen and Phillips 2010). Gee (2011) acknowledges that discourses may both be large- and small-scale, which means that “minorities” might form their own discourses.

Discursive power then implies both framing and resistance towards being framed. In this work, it is likely that the clients, local people and the street-level bureaucrats may engage in these forms of discursive power. When it comes to the street-level bureaucrats, they also have formal organisational and policy-rooted power to steer and face clients with demands. A relevant question here is what might the relationship between discursive and formal power turn out to be? It seems logical that the conduct of formal power towards clients may either be in accordance or in contradiction with discourses the street-level bureaucrats have formulated on the clients.

Individuals may belong to a specific discourse only, and also place themselves in various discourses, and thus express different types of identities (Winther-Jørgensen and Phillips 2010).

A final point to make is what I call the contextualization of specific discourses. The content of specific discourses as they are presented in research projects will most likely, at the outset, seem limited in terms of time, place and language (dialects and sociolects). A relevant question to ask is if the content of a specific discourse may be seen as part of broader culturally and historically rooted societal discourses. The relevance of this inquiry is related to the question of in what way and to what extent findings in a research project are generalizable. As an example, there will most likely be a variety of particular ways to express discourses related social deviance, but as underlined by Conrad and Schneider (1992) through history three major discourses have been typical. Social deviance has been described as sin (religious underpinning), crime (legal underpinning) and disease (scientific underpinning).

In this work, I suggest a relationship between the model of analysis and analysis of discourse. This relationship is at the outset tentative. I view the elements included in the model of analysis to be the institutional basis for discourses; broad frames that guides the content of a

discourse and the qualitative distinction⁵¹ between them: traits of the activation policy, the local context, characteristics of policy implementing street-level bureaucracy and traits of the clients.

Chapter overview

In *chapter one* I have given an introduction to the subject matter, presented the problem statement and given a theoretical perspective related mainly to street-level bureaucracy. I ended the chapter by presenting a model of analysis and the theoretical aim of the study, as well as discussing the concept of discourse. *Chapter two* addresses methodology and focuses on the design of the study, the concepts of case study and comparisons, and research ethics and ends with a presentation of various methodological reflections. *Chapter three* presents the local context and thus gives a description of the two communities—“the Fjord” and “the Bay”. The focus there is on the local labour market, norms related to work and conduct of life and structural properties of the local street-level bureaucracies. *Chapter four* examines how single mothers and unemployed youth are judged by local people and points at discourses related to this. *Chapter five* analyses how the street-level bureaucrats in the two communities implement the activation policy towards single mothers and unemployed youth. At the end of this chapter suggested discourses and distinctions between the street-level bureaucracies are presented.

Chapter six examines client experiences and point at discourses related to this.

Chapter seven is the conclusion. This chapter starts by revisiting the model of analysis presented in the first chapter. Then follows a theoretical analysis of the problem statement, focusing on discourses that have been identified through the empirical investigation, after which I compare the discourses.

I then summarize the main findings related to the young clients by focusing on material and procedural consequences. Chapter seven concludes with a discussion of the possibilities to generalise from the study and what this work may represent as a contribution to the theoretical field of street-level bureaucracy. The *appendices* section includes the interview guides and vignettes that have been used in the interviews, and also document quotes from interviews that have not been directly applied in the chapters. The logic behind this is explained in chapter two.

⁵¹ Distinctions or delimitations of discourses is not only related to differences with regard to their content, but may also be related to time. This means that at certain times in history a discourse is hegemonic and governs what is defined as truth regarding a specific subject-matter. Then a new discourse may replace the former discourse (Foucault 1972). This resembles Kuhn's (1996) notion of paradigms in the natural sciences. In this work I concede the possibility to discover several and competing discourses existing side by side at the present.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to address the methodological issues relating to the study. This involves providing an account of the research design, and reflecting upon ethical and scientific challenges.

A specific challenge to be discussed is the fact that a part of the empirical material used here is based upon a previous research project, where four researchers were involved. This is related to what in this chapter is presented as *the “2000-2001-study”*. The following researchers were involved here: Kåre Heggen⁵², Alf Roger Djupvik, Gunnar Jørgensen and Cecilie Wilhelmsen. These researchers took part in all stages of the research process: constructing the interview guide, recruiting respondents, conducting interviews, performing transcriptions and reporting. Concerning reporting, Cecilie Wilhelmsen (2001) wrote a master’s thesis where she focused on the experiences of single mothers and asked whether they were accepted or stigmatized in the communities studied. Heggen, Jørgensen and Djupvik (2003) wrote the official report from the study. Heggen had a special responsibility for writing about frames for the youth roles of the welfare state, local attitudes towards the youth roles of the welfare state and local frames for youth in client roles. Jørgensen had a special focus on the local labour market, resistance cultures in local schools and class and youth culture distinctions in the communities. Djupvik looked into traits of the communities, the national activation policy and discussed whether clients in local street-level bureaucracies were integrated or stigmatized.

The empirical material underpinning this work is based upon:

- Interviews with single mothers, unemployed youth, local people and street-level bureaucrats in 2000-2001
- Interviews with street-level bureaucrats in 2005

Research design

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:102) the research design of an interview inquiry contains seven stages: thematizing, design, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting. I have found these stages of relevance when describing the steps of the present study, from its preparation to the final reporting.

⁵² Professor Kåre Heggen was the project leader.

Thematizing

This stage relates to the purpose of a research investigation, and involves addressing what one wants to study, and the relevance of the study. As stated in chapter one I have a special interest in understanding how street-level bureaucracies work when implementing public policies. This interest goes back to my past studies of political science at the University of Bergen⁵³ in the 1980s. At that time I became acquainted with Lipsky's theory on that subject (Lipsky 1980; Offerdal 1986), as well as theories on access to public services which may be seen as relevant to the understanding of street-level bureaucracy (cf. Schaffer and Huang 1975; Bleiklie, Dahl Jacobsen and Thorsvik 1997⁵⁴).

At the beginning of 2000, I became strongly aware of the importance of relating implementation of public policies to local contexts. This is connected to two research projects. The first one I was not involved in, but in the second one I was a research fellow.

The first of these projects was named "*the marginalization project*"⁵⁵ which analysed the situation for youth in six coastal municipalities in Norway at the end of the 1990s (Heggen, Jørgensen and Paulgaard 1999, 2003). In this project, the researchers found it useful to distinguish between integrated versus marginalized youth. Youth seen as marginalized, or at least within processes of marginalization in relation to work and education, were sometimes clients at local welfare bureaucracies. This experience was not always a positive one seen from the perspective of some of the young clients, mainly because such roles sometimes contradicted local norms and values.

This led some of the researchers to focus on a second study at the turn of the millennium. Single mothers and young persons with marginal work experience were studied in two coastal municipalities in Norway. These communities are nicknamed as "the Fjord" and "the Bay", and will be described in the next chapter.

The two municipalities were among the six that were studied in the "marginalization project". This second project was named "*Local and cultural frames for the youth roles of the welfare state*"⁵⁶, and analysed how client roles were perceived within a local context. Besides the mentioned client categories, officials at local welfare bureaucracies and persons who held steady jobs in the communities were studied. The findings in this project partly confirmed the assumption, stemming from the marginalization project, that entering client roles in a local

⁵³ Department of Administration and Organization Theory.

⁵⁴ The article of Bleiklie, Dahl Jacobsen and Thorsvik entitled "Forvaltningen og den enkelte" was initially presented in 1979 (Skare and Bakkevig 1979).

⁵⁵ This project was funded by the Norwegian Research Council.

⁵⁶ This project was (also) funded by the Norwegian Research Council.

context could be a negative experience (embarrassment and stigma) as seen from the perspective of some of the clients and some of the local people.

In this second project, three major issues were addressed: 1) What kind of attitudes and values may be identified towards youth entering client roles, among different categories of respondents and communities? 2) Are such cultural expressions connected to the main characteristics of the particular local settings (communities)? 3) What kind of effect might such local and cultural frames have on clients of local welfare bureaucracies? (Heggen, Djupvik and Jørgensen 2000, 2003).

The present work is a further development of some of the perspectives which were explored in the two previous projects. A major continuity with the preceding projects is to explore the problems by focusing on the relationship between client positions and the *local context*. The report from the second project was (translated into English⁵⁷) titled “*The youth roles of the welfare state – defined by the state – constructed locally*”. By its focus on clients, street-level bureaucracies and local communities, I argue that the empirical material is well suited to illuminate the following research elements (initially presented in chapter one):

- How do young single mothers and unemployed youth experience being clients at the local welfare bureaucracies?
- How do the street-level bureaucrats at the local welfare bureaucracies implement the activation policy towards young single mothers and unemployed youth?
- How are young single mothers and unemployed youth judged by people locally as clients within the local welfare bureaucracies?
- What are the local frames with regard to client experiences, judgments of the clients and the implementation of the activation policy in the two communities?

The new profile of this present work (this thesis) is to link the analysis closely to the theoretical perspective on street-level bureaucracy.

⁵⁷ The Norwegian title of this report is *Velferdsstatens ungdomsroller. Statleg definerte – lokalt konstruerte* (Heggen, Djupvik and Jørgensen 2003)

Design

Design means to plan a study. In reality there are two studies that underpin this work. The first one was carried out in 2000 and 2001, which includes qualitative interviews with young clients, street-level bureaucrats and people locally. The second study was carried out in 2005, and consists of qualitative interviews with street-level bureaucrats only.

The design of the 2000-2001 study

The first decision to make was what communities to study. The final communities were chosen because they had been studied in the marginalization project, and the researchers experienced they had in-depth knowledge on the “the Fjord” and “the Bay”, which would be useful for the analysis. In addition, it was obvious that the two communities for some variables would appear to be different from one another, enabling a comparative analysis. The two communities appear to some extent to be *polarised*: they have *different* population figures, types of main industries, locality (insulation vs. functional region⁵⁸), occupational structures, as well as main properties of street-level bureaucracies. These characteristics will be presented and analysed in the following chapters. The differences between the communities are aspects I wanted to build upon in this present work. One of the communities—“the Fjord”—is characterized by a narrow labour market and street-level bureaucracies that are small and where professionals are mainly absent. “The Bay” has a wider labour market and larger and far more professionalized bureaucracies (cf. chapter three and five). This distinction appeared at the outset to represent the possibility for useful comparisons and the possibility to perform analytical generalizations.

Before the formal interviews with the categories of *respondents* were conducted, the research team performed informal interviews with *informants* in the communities: teachers, leaders of organizations, firms and politicians were interviewed. Approximately 20 such interviews⁵⁹ were conducted all together. These informant-interviews were performed before the construction of the interview guide to be used in the formal interviews, and the argument for conducting them was to enable the researchers to formulate relevant research and interview questions. The divide between informants and respondents refers to the distinction between pilot-interviews and structured interviews.

⁵⁸ The concept of functional region is defined in chapter three.

⁵⁹ The questions are presented in appendix 2.1

The second decision to make was the selection of respondents to be included in the formal interviews. Three main categories of respondents were defined as relevant to be interviewed. The first category is made up of *young clients*; young single mothers and young unemployed persons (men and women). These are important target groups for the Norwegian authorities, and thus relevant to focus upon (cf. chapter one). Some single parents are males, but official statistics (Rikstrygdeverket 2000) show that the overwhelming majority on a national basis is women (95%). Therefore, the researchers focused on single *mothers*. (I am referring to the figures from the year of 2000, since they are from the same year as the first wave of interviews were conducted.)

The single mothers were in the age range of 19-33 years. The “unemployed youth” were in the age range of 18-33 years. At the outset the age range for the young clients was decided as 18-29 years. In two cases we decided to compromise on this principle to be able to take into consideration the aim of a satisfactorily number of interviews. This means that one single mother and one unemployed youth, each at the age of 33, were interviewed.

A primary inclusion criterion in this category was a combination of age range and formal position as a client. Officials at the local welfare bureaucracies assisted the researchers in recruiting the actual clients. As a rule, the officials contacted the actual clients, either by a phone call or by letter, beforehand asking them to participate. We also recruited some clients by asking interviewed clients if they knew someone who they thought might be interested in being interviewed and who fit our recruitment criteria⁶⁰.

This implies that there were three principles for selecting the actual respondents: age, position and willingness to participate. The willingness principle represents a methodological challenge, since the actual sample of respondents might be biased if persons with special experiences are reluctant to be interviewed⁶¹.

The second category of respondents was local people. This was a strategic sample of people who lived and worked in the communities. Some of these respondents were young workers in factories⁶², shops, and the like. The young workers were in the same age range as the young clients. Also included were middle-aged workers (who worked in factories and shops), who

⁶⁰ We did not use the term “client” when speaking with them.

⁶¹ The question of respondent bias will be addressed later in this chapter.

⁶² Young and elderly workers in factories indicate those who work for dominant firms in the community.

also were parents and had children in the same age range as the young clients. Finally, middle-aged people who may be defined as having a middle class⁶³ background were included. These respondents also had children in the same age range as the young clients. These respondents were recruited in two ways. First, we asked the *informants*⁶⁴ if they knew workers and middle class persons whom we might contact. Then we asked interviewed persons if they knew others in the same category that we might ask to be interviewed.

The third category was officials employed at the local *street-level bureaucracies*: the Social Welfare Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office. The principles for choosing respondents at the street-level bureaucracies were two-fold. We interviewed the leaders⁶⁵ of the offices to obtain some general information on our research issues. Then we recruited those bureaucrats who worked especially with single mothers and the young and unemployed, as this was how their positions in the organization were defined. The office-leaders knew which officials we should interview.

The interviews: numbers and samples

From the beginning the goal was to conduct 8-10 interviews in each category of respondents in each community with regards to local people and the young clients. We met this goal. Among the clients and people locally some declined to be interviewed, at which point the researchers managed to find replacements. Concerning the local street-level bureaucrats, all those who had a primary relationship with the young clients as part of their work were interviewed.

I will argue that a sufficient number of interviews have been conducted in the different respondent categories, making it possible to cover a crucial variety in experiences, judgments and forms of policy implementation.

⁶³ Types of occupations include: teacher, leaders of private firms, public administrators.

⁶⁴ I am referring to the informal interviews with informants mentioned above.

⁶⁵ The welfare bureaucracies of the two communities are relatively small organisations. This means that the leaders interviewed in fact deal with the young clients of services as an official.

Table 2.1: *Number of interviews in 2000 and 2001 specified by categories of respondents and communities.*

Category of respondents	“The Bay”	“The Fjord”	Total
Unemployed youth	11	6	17
Single mothers	7	6	13
Young workers	8	10	18
Middle-aged workers	9	9	18
Middle-class	12	8	20
Officials at the Social Welfare Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office.	8	6	14
Total	55	45	100

The design of the 2005 study

The 2005 study was planned and conducted by the author of this work.

New interviews with the street-level bureaucrats were conducted during the fall of 2005. All together 14 interviews were conducted; six in “the Fjord” and eight in “the Bay”. The 14 interviewed respondents of the new material represent all who work mainly with single mothers and unemployed youth at the offices, and at the same time cover a variation in forms of implementation. Some of the new interviews were with respondents who were interviewed in the 2000-2001 study, and some were new respondents all together. The reason for conducting new interviews with the street-level bureaucrats is not that something “was wrong” with the interviews of 2000 and 2001. Rather I wanted a more specific focus on how the street-level bureaucrats implemented the activation policy towards the young clients than the former interviews allowed. This is also the reason why I present the analysis of the street-level bureaucrats in chapter five on the last study. This means that the interviews with the street-level bureaucrats in 2000-2001 became altered; they served as a background for constructing the interview guide in the 2005 study.

Table 2.2: Number of interviews in the 2005-study specified by categories of respondents and communities

CATEGORY OF RESPONDENTS	“THE BAY”	“THE FJORD”	TOTAL
<i>Officials at the Social Welfare Office</i>	3	2	5
<i>Officials at the Local Employment Office</i>	3	2	5
<i>Officials at the Social Security Office</i>	2	2	4
Total	8	6	14

This work, then, is based upon a mix of *older* and *newer* sets of data. The question is if this presents a problem. In order to discuss this I find it reasonable to relate this question to the content of the model of analysis presented in chapter one:

The activation policy. The major changes relating to aims and demands towards single providers and unemployed youth was put into effect in 1998 (cf. chapter one). For single providers there was a change in 2004, which meant that a segment of them received the possibility to prolong the period of transitional support by one extra year, if this was needed to complete an educational program⁶⁶. In 2002, the introduction of report cards for persons on work-related rehabilitation was introduced⁶⁷. The objective of this was to ensure that individuals on this programme were “reminded” of their relationship to the Local Employment Office and to strengthen the follow-up functions of the welfare bureaucracies towards clients in the programme. Before 2004, youth younger than 22 years of age were not included in this program, but after 2004 the limit was increased to the age of 26. However, the impression from the interviews in 2005 is that few persons in their 20s are included in this programme. In 2006, the Government published a white paper⁶⁸ that introduced those changes in the activation policy that are implemented at the present, where central elements are the

⁶⁶ Source: Storingsmelding nr. 9 (2006-2007).

⁶⁷ Source: Storingsmelding nr. 9 (2006-2007).

⁶⁸ Source: Storingsmelding nr. 9 (2006-2007).

“welfare contract” and the “clarifying” programme. In the years 2000-2005, only marginal changes within the activation policy relevant for unemployed youth and single mothers occurred.

The organisation of the street-level bureaucracies. In 2000-2001 the Local Employment Office, the Social Welfare Office and the Social Security Office were separate organisations, as was also the situation in the fall of 2005. The formal reorganisation and merger of these offices into the new employment and welfare organisation (NAV) was effect on 1 July 2006 (Christensen, Fimreite and Læg Reid 2007). This indicates that in the period 2000-2005 the formal structure of the offices studied in this work was not yet changed by the Government.

The local context. In the communities studied the main characteristics regarding the local labour market are structurally the same as in the 2000-2005 period: a dominant fish industry in “the Fjord” and shipbuilding industry within a functional region in “the Bay”. The local properties of the street-level bureaucracies concerning size and traits of the personnel have changed insignificantly during these years.

The clients. Concerning the unemployed youth their traits are similar as they are defined by the researcher—a focus on clients in their 20s that are unemployed and have a relationship to one or more of the three offices studied here. The single mothers were presented in the 2000-2001 as having a major link to the Social Security Office and that they were working or undertaking an educational career. This was also the finding in the 2005 study.

Interviewing

The primary method employed in the 2000-2001 study as well as in the 2005 study is qualitative interviews. The argument for choosing this method is that such interviews allow for in-depth knowledge on how respondents subjectively experience their own situation, as well as how they perceive others—in the form of judgments and implementation practices (cf. Kvale and Brinkman 2009; Heggen, Jørgensen and Djupvik 2000, 2003). Another argument relates to the profile of the study. Even if the research is impacted by established theories, a goal was to investigate aspects that might have been overlooked in previous research on street-level bureaucracies. Qualitative interviews allow for discovering such aspects, as this method is suited to placing focus on respondent views. This means that the respondents are “allowed” to talk about issues beyond those planned by the researcher as long as they are

related to the research questions⁶⁹. As a rule, the interviewers routinely asked the respondents if there was anything “they wanted to add” (i.e.: themes which were not included in the interview guide but which may be of relevance to the research questions). This approach has an important scientific implication, namely that it offers an opportunity to develop one’s understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Both interview studies have been conducted on the basis of an interview guide, in order to formulate questions that are suited to illuminate the four research elements.

The 2000-2001 study

In the 2000-2001 study, the researchers developed a common interview guide on the basis of the previous informant interviews and literature studies (Heggen, Jørgensen and Djupvik 2000, 2003). When the interviews were performed, the interview guide⁷⁰ was adapted so that the client-interviews focused mainly on the clients’ experiences as clients, and the interviews with local people mainly focused how they judged the young clients. In the interviews with the young clients and local people, the researchers employed two vignettes⁷¹ (Heggen, Jørgensen and Djupvik 2003; Wilhelmsen 2001) as part of the interviews and in addition to the interview guide in order to focus on the *clients*. A vignette is a constructed case describing a person, a situation or an act (Järgeby 1993), here in the form of a single mother and an unemployed man with problems relating to schooling, work and drug abuse. Both vignettes then focused on a problem situation. Vignettes are intended to be realistic (Järgeby 1993), but also invite the respondent to reason judgments and actions that ought to be taken. If one constructs a vignette that is realistic, but that does not contain problems or dilemmas, then there is not much to reflect upon. Therefore, both vignettes presented the unemployed youth and the single mother as having personal problems.

Vignettes may be used as a sole method in a study (Järgeby 1993) and may then be used as a quantitative method, and also in combination with, for example, qualitative methods such as personal interviews where the respondents are invited to reflect upon the content of the vignette (cf. Rahman 1996). I employ the latter variant of this method.

The purpose of using these vignettes was to facilitate a discussion with the respondents concerning matters such as responsibility for the client’s own situation, whether the local

⁶⁹ According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009) research questions (as well as interview questions) are related to an interview guide.

⁷⁰ A detailed version of this interview guide is attached as appendix 2.2

⁷¹ The vignettes are attached as appendix 2.3

companies ought to help by giving them placements and what the local street-level bureaucracies should do in order to help the clients. The vignettes directed the respondents at first to talk about the content of the vignettes as such. After some time the interviews moved on in such a way that the clients were encouraged to talk about their own personal experiences and local people were asked to focus on young clients they knew (of) in the community. This means that the quotations from the interviews are related to personal experiences and judgments; they are not comments upon the vignettes as such.

The personal experiences of the clients were obtained through questions addressing what kind of street-level bureaucracies they had a relationship with locally, what they thought of having established such a relationship, how they evaluated the services and the interaction with the officials, as well as how they thought people locally judged young clients. The figure below summarizes the main research and interview questions related to the young clients.

Figure 2.1: *Research questions and main interview questions with regard to the young clients in the 2000-2001 study*

Research Questions	Main Interview Questions
1. Own values and norms in relation to work, education and conduct of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you consider as a “good job”? - Would you like to work at the main industry locally? - Do you think one should accept boredom in connection to a job? - Do you think you have a duty to support yourself financially? - What kind of education do you have? - What was your experience from attending school? - Do you have any future plans with regard to education? - Can you tell us something about your own habits with regard to drugs, and how you look upon this? - What do you think of having children outside of marriage?
2. Relations to the local labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What has been your main income the last years? - What kind of work experience do you have? - Have you been laid off in periods? - Have you had any kind of support from local welfare services while being unemployed?
3. Social Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you have relatives in the community? - Can you tell us about your parent’s education and work? - Can you tell us about friends that you have locally? - Have you/do you attend organized leisure activities in the community?
4. Experience as a client with local street-level bureaucracies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of local office(s) have you had/still have contact with? - What do you think of having established a relation to the office(s)? - What do you think of the programmes you have been attached to/the help you have received? - What do you think of the interaction/communication with the officials at the office(s)? - How do you think one is looked upon by the people in the community when one is having a relation to the office(s)?

People locally were asked to tell us how they judged the young clients, and then the researchers formulated the necessary follow-up questions to be able to gain insight on how they reasoned with regard to this matter. The figure below summarizes the main research and interview questions related to local people.

Figure 2.2: *Research questions and main Interview questions with regard to local people in the 2000-2001 study*

Research Questions	Main Interview Questions
1. Own values and norms in relation to work, education and conduct of life	<i>(Research question number 1 was integrated in the interview questions that focused how local people judged the young clients).</i>
2. Relations to the local labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your present occupation? - What kind of work experience do you have? - Have you been laid off in periods? - Have you had any kind of support from local welfare services while being unemployed? - What kind of education do you have?
3. Own professional/educational background – type and level	
4. Knowledge on clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you know single mothers and/or unemployed youth that receive assistance from the local offices in the community personally? - What do you think of young single mothers/unemployed youth? - What do you think of young single mothers/unemployed youth that have a relation to local welfare offices? - Is this related to whether they are unemployed, on drugs or if they are employed and/or undertaking education? - Do you have any opinions on the local welfare offices that try to aid young single mothers\ unemployed youth?
5. Judgment of clients	

As can be seen from the figures above the interviews with the clients and local people did not solely focus upon experiences and judgments. In addition, they focused on the respondents' social relationships in the community, their age, their relations to schooling/education, work, leisure activities and drug abuse. When interviewing people locally we asked them whether they knew any young clients in the community or not. The purpose of investigating these themes was to establish a basis for contextualising experiences and judgments.

The interviews with the clients and local people were normally performed at the local hotel in both communities, where the researchers stayed during field work. Steps were taken to secure that the interviews took place in surroundings that offered anonymity.

The 2005 study

In the 2005 study the interview guide⁷² was constructed by the author of this work, and it was influenced by the knowledge gained from the second research project mentioned above, as well as literature studies primarily on street-level bureaucracy. The main focus in these

⁷² This interview guide is attached as appendix 2.4.

interviews was how the street-level bureaucrats implemented the activation policy, with reference to the implementation concept as it was defined in chapter one. The interviews also addressed personal and organisational background variables, which seemed relevant on how implementation takes place. These interviews also took into consideration the fact that they were conducted 4-5 years later than the previous interviews. This meant the respondents were asked whether there had been relevant changes in the communities, at the offices and between the offices which could be of importance to the analysis. The figure below summarizes the main research and interview questions related to the street-level bureaucrats in 2005. In addition to the main interview questions, there was one “standard” question which was asked throughout the interviews, which was formulated this way: “In what way do the community/local conditions have an impact on this matter?” This question was asked to secure an impression on the possible influence of the local context (cf. chapter one), and was asked in connection with all the interview questions that focused the theme of implementation.

Figure 2.3: *Research questions and main Interview questions with regard to street-level bureaucrats in the 2005 study*

Research Questions	Main Interview Questions
1. Educational/professional background	- What kind of education do you have?
2. Traits of the organization/work conditions	- How many officials are there at this office - How do you look upon the personnel situation?
3. Relations to the community/main industries	- Are you from this community? - For how long have you lived/worked here? - What other occupations have you had in this community?
4. Own values and norms in relation to work, education, and conduct of life	- Do you have any expectations towards young single mothers/unemployed youth with regard to what they ought to do?
5. How the activation policy is implemented	- What kind of information do young single mothers/unemployed youth have to give to the office about themselves? - Do you have any opinion with regard to properties concerning young single mothers/unemployed youth? - Can you say something on how it specifically is worked with young single mothers/unemployed youth? - Can you say something concerning the interaction between you/the office and young single mothers/unemployed youth? - What are important differences between the Local Employment Office, the Social Welfare Office and the Social Security Office?

Research questions 1-3 are straight forward, as they primarily ask for facts. Research question 4 is not primarily about the street-level bureaucrats as such, but is rather directed towards how their values and norms are related to the young clients. Therefore, the corresponding interview question was formulated in the manner presented. As noted in chapter one, the implementation concept consists of three elements: the classification of clients; types of arrangements/programmes the clients are linked to; and consequences for the clients of being “processed” by street-level bureaucracies. The interview question on how it is “worked with clients” is meant to illustrate types of arrangements/programmes, and the question on “properties” should reveal information on classifications. The interview question on “information about themselves” will most likely reveal a characteristic about classifications in the sense that this question may illuminate what aspects of the client the street-level

bureaucrats are focusing on in order to work with them, and will also speak to consequences for the clients. The interview questions on “interaction/communication” with the clients, and the one on “differences between the offices” are also of relevance in illuminating consequences: what does the encounter with the bureaucrats mean to the clients? And do the different offices hold different types of demands towards the clients, and do the offices have different statuses and reputations in the community?

The interviews were performed at the work place of the respondent.

Interview strategies

In both studies the conduct of the interviews followed some principles of sequence (cf. Kvale and Brinkman 2009). Each interview started with rather “neutral” and general questions such as where they grew up and whether they enjoyed living in the community and so on. The importance of these types of initial questions is to show genuine interest in the respondent, and to build trust between the interviewer and the respondent. After these types of questions, the main questions followed.

The research questions were translated into understandable interview questions, which were formulated in such a way that they made the respondents want to talk about the various themes. This means the use of neutral rather than provocative and labelling words. The interview questions (cf. figures above) were standardized. In the individual interview, they were not formulated in a literal form. Rather the interviewer had to adjust the oral presentation of such questions according to the individual respondent’s preconditions. This must be done if interview questions should have the same meaning to different respondents (Kvale and Brinkman 2009; Shaffer and Elkins 2005). This also means that the formulated interview questions in the figures above illustrate *one* way of formulating the questions in a specific manner. The practical interview guide was as well written in a more keyword-like fashion.

In order to secure best possible interview quality the interviewers asked follow-up and probing questions (cf. Kvale and Brinkman 2009) in both studies.

Transcribing

A qualitative research interview is a living interaction between the interviewer and the respondent. In order to use the interviews for analysis and reporting the oral form has to be transformed into text. According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009) the researcher can use both memory and keywords noted during the interview, or by the use of a tape recorder. In both studies a tape recorder was used and was a tape recorder of high acoustic quality that provided good sound quality. In only a few cases the respondents denied a tape recorder be used. In the 2005 study the interviews were transcribed by the author of this work. In the 2000-2001 study the interviews were transcribed by five persons: four researchers and one secretary. It was, therefore, important to agree upon certain common guidelines for transcribing the interviews.

Three principles were agreed upon: to distinguish clearly between when the interviewer (“I”) and the respondent (“R”) are talking; to transcribe verbatim and word-for-word to reflect what was detailed and literally said; and to transcribe (in brackets) non-verbal communication such as body language, laughter, pauses and tone of voice. The last principle is important as there is a difference between oral and written language, and there is a danger that this difference may not be reflected in transcription, for instance with regard to statements of irony (cf. Bourdieu et al. 1999). Transcriptions can, to a certain degree, take this language difference into consideration by the way they are conducted. The three principles also applied with regard to the 2005 study.

Analyzing

To analyze interviews represents choices related to theories of knowledge as well as deciding upon practical ways to deal with an (encompassing) interview material.

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), there are several possible choices of techniques related to theories of knowledge: interpretation of meaning; linguistic analysis; conversation analysis; narrative analysis; discourse analysis; and theoretical analysis. It is also possible to combine primary forms of analysis. Some writers align themselves with a certain type of analysis technique, while others do not state anything explicit about this (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). This means that there is not one common agreed-upon way of analyzing qualitative interviews.

In this work, the technique of analysis is based upon the following: a theoretical oriented way of analyzing the interview material. A primary goal of the study is to elaborate on the

understanding of the functioning of street-level bureaucracy. This means that the interviews will be interpreted and related to the theoretical perspectives presented in chapter one, but at the same time allow the empirical material to supplement the established theories (cf. Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Glaser and Strauss 1999; Malterud 2001).

The analysis of the interviews will also draw upon insights gained from discourse theory⁷³.

The practical aspect of analyzing the interview material is related to structures and coding procedures (cf. Corbin and Strauss 1999; Charmaz 2006). By structures I mean to analyse the material according to the primary respondent categories and the distinction between the two communities. This is one way to handle the material, but there are also some implications for the reporting structure. By coding procedures I point at the principle of trying to find out if it is reasonable to speak of *similar*: client experiences; judgments of clients by local people; and implementation forms at the street-level bureaucracies, if this seems reasonable in relation to the content of the interview material. By “similar” I mean interviews and quotes that seem alike because they resemble each other without being considered as identical.

Verifying

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), verifying relates to reliability, validity and the possibility to generalize from a qualitative research study, and this is connected to all stages of an interview enquiry. Here I link the question of verifying to qualities of the empirical interview material, i.e., the content and quality of the interviews.

Reliability

Reliability relates to the consistency and trustworthiness of the interview material (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). To secure reliability both interview studies have followed the following principles: to avoid leading questions and rather operate within open formulations to reveal the respondents viewpoints. The use of the tape recorder ensured the interviews be registered as accurately as possible. The principles of transcribing should ensure that the interviews were converted into text as accurate as possible.

Then there is the question of respondent bias, which is of relevance for what one finds and the possibilities to perform systematic comparisons. Concerning the street-level bureaucrats I was allowed to interview those planning to be interviewed. None in this respondent category

⁷³ Cf. the presentation of the discourse concept in chapter one.

refused to be interviewed. Concerning the local people a few declined to be interviewed, and we were able to find “replacements”. I do not consider respondent bias to be a problem in this category. Concerning the young clients, we interviewed unemployed youth that all together represents a variety with regard to social networks in the community, degree of integration on the labour market, and social problems. Concerning the single mothers it is a fact that most of them had a relationship paid work and/or were undertaking an educational career at the time of the interviews. If young single mothers in the communities existed in 2000–2001, who were in processes of marginalization—they are not significantly included in the material. This is something to be aware of, and may represent a form of respondent bias and thus a limitation. In “the Fjord” six out of 11 possible single mothers and seven out of 14 possible single mothers in “the Bay” were interviewed (Wilhelmsen 2001). With regard to the unemployed youth in “the Bay”, we interviewed persons with a large and varied degree of marginalisation and duration in the client position, as well as affiliation with the three offices. The young and unemployed clients in “the Fjord” were obviously out of work, and some of them had experienced problems while attending the compulsory school. Some of these clients had contact with two of the offices, and others with all three of them. One of these clients had been part of the local drug-culture. As researchers we were informed of the existence of this drug-culture called the “Marihuana-gang” in “the Fjord”, consisting of young persons who were also clients with the local street-level bureaucracies, and one of the respondents included in the interview material was related to that youth culture. We tried on several occasions to recruit additional respondents from this segment of clients, with no success. Either the potential respondents we were in contact with refused to be interviewed or they were serving time in prisons, which made it difficult to arrange for interviews with them. This means that the young and unemployed clients interviewed in “the Fjord” are not those with the most substantial processes of marginalization and neither are they considered to be “veterans” in the client position. This is something to be aware of concerning the experiences reported from the young and unemployed clients in “the Fjord”.

Validity

Validity in qualitative interview research relates to whether the method used “investigates what is intended to investigate” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:246; see also Pervin 1984). An important step in securing validity in this work is that the research questions are rooted in theories relevant for the study of street-level bureaucracy, and that the research questions have been transformed into practical interview questions that correspond to the research questions.

The use of interview guides ensures that the relevant questions have been asked. The qualitative interview method also ensures the ability through the conversation between the interviewer and the respondent to reveal misunderstandings, and thus ensures that the respondent understands what one is asking. Validity in qualitative interviews also relates to the coherence criterion which refers to “the consistency and internal logic of a statement” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:246).

Generalization

A commonplace question in research projects is if it is possible to generalize from the findings. This is an important question especially in research where generalization is an explicit objective. In certain case studies generalization need not be a goal, because the purpose may be to achieve knowledge limited to that specific case (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Stake 2005). In this present work, the goal is to develop an understanding of street-level bureaucracy with a special focus on the clients, so the generalization question has to be addressed. The concept of generalization has different meanings based on its relationship to theories of knowledge. In quantitative research, we speak of statistical generalization, where the question is whether it is possible to generalize from a sample to a universe, and what rules of method are to be followed. In this work, which relies upon qualitative interviews, it is more relevant to speak of analytical generalization (Stake 2005). Analytical generalizations take into consideration the detailed and specific context of cases and points at transferability to another situation, by examining differences and similarities between studied cases and other situations (cf. Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Writers such as Flyvbjerg (2006), Stake (2005) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) then suggest that it is possible to perform analytical generalizations on the basis of qualitative case studies—and this may be done both by the researcher and readers of the researcher’s text. Peattie (2001) underlines that generalizing may simplify the specific context of case studies, and that one therefore ought to be cautious when attempting to generalizing from such studies.

I will return to the question of analytical generalization in the concluding chapter of this study, when the analytical work has been conducted.

Reporting

The final step concerning design is to decide on principles of reporting. This has to do with at a minimum two issues: how to structure the thesis; and how to practically and analytically use the interview material in terms of quoting.

Structure

It is important to choose a structure which provides meaning to the reader. I have chosen a basic structure that has been suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). In chapter one I present the theme of this study—what is to be studied and the purpose of it. In this chapter (chapter two) I give an overview of methodological issues, as well as pointing out limitations and dilemmas connected with this study. It is crucial to present the methodological steps and challenges as transparently and honestly as possible in order to let the reader make up his or her mind regarding the trustworthiness of the results. In chapters three to six I present the results. Chapter three discusses the local frames. Chapter four investigates how the young clients are judged by local people. Chapter five discusses how the street-level bureaucracies implement the activation policy. Chapter six examines client experiences. Chapter seven is the conclusion where implications from the study are discussed.

Quoting

The practical use of interviews is in the form of quotes, and some “rules of thumb” are suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). These “rules” are adapted in this work: the quotes should be contextualized so that they relate to the main content of the whole interview, in that the actual quote represents a strong tendency in the interview and not just a loose fragment. The quotes should be interpreted by the researcher in light of the theoretical underpinnings (here presented in chapter one). Next there should be a balance between quotes and the analytical text in order to avoid empirical “overload”. It is also suggested that one should only use the “best” quotes, meaning those which represent the “most extensive, illuminating and well-formulated statements. For documentation it is sufficient to mention how many other subjects express the same viewpoints” (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:280). This “rule” seems relevant in this study since it consists of 100⁷⁴ qualitative interviews, and the challenge with regard to empirical “overload” has to be addressed. It is important, however, to document that other interviews represent similar viewpoints to those quoted. I have decided to let “similar quotes” be presented in an appendices section⁷⁵, making it possible for the reader to

⁷⁴ Since the interviews with the street-level bureaucrats in the 2000-2001 study are not actively included in the analysis the correct number of interviews are 100.

⁷⁵ In chapter five I have included all respondent interviews as there are few interviews with the street-level bureaucrats. In chapter six I have included some of the interviews (and quotes) with the young clients and the remaining in the appendices section. In chapter four I have included some interview quotes with local people, but most of the quotes are in the appendices section. With regard to the interviews with local people, the majority of them were possible to quote. However, three interviews of local people in “the Fjord” and three in “the Bay” were of less informative value, i.e., these interviews are not fully quoted (since they only had quotable formulations on one of the client categories).

judge whether classifications of “similar quotes” seems reasonable or not. I do believe this approach is necessary in a doctoral thesis, where demands of documentation are strong⁷⁶.

Case studies and comparisons

In the description of the research design the concepts of cases and comparisons have briefly been mentioned. I shall below reflect upon these concepts, and their meaning in this work.

The concept of the *case study* is not very well defined in the literature (cf. Kaarbo and Beasley 1999; Yin 1994; King, Keohane and Verba 1994). Ragin (1992) argues that the concept of case study may be understood in two basic and different ways. The first looks upon cases as something which are to be seen as an empirical unit, and thus may be discovered by the researcher. The second looks upon cases as theoretical constructs, implying that the particular researcher plays a crucial role in creating the case. Ragin underlines that the two main perspectives on cases may be combined, in the sense that empirical cases pave the way for theoretical constructs. In this work the case concept represents *at the outset* three basic levels: the *communities* of “the Bay” and “the Fjord”; the *categories* of respondents; and the *individual* respondent. At the *community* level; the cases of “the Fjord” and “the Bay” represent both empirical and theoretical understandings of what a case is. The two communities are municipalities (political-administrative entities), which means that structural information on them is available. This covers all the numerical information produced by Statistics Norway (such as figures on population, demographic composition, unemployment, and the principal industries). This, in addition to the geographical delineations, may be seen as empirical aspects of the case concept at the community level. Additionally, the communities are furthermore interpreted by the researcher’s own theoretical perspectives, the problems on which he is focusing and the research questions he is putting to the fore. In this sense the communities are not only “found”, they are also shaped by the researcher. At the level of *respondent categories*, the theoretical perspective on the concept of case is quite obvious. Through theories and prior knowledge the researcher defines which are the relevant categories of respondents, such as type of young clients, the segments of local people focused upon, as well as the definition and limitations of the street-level bureaucracies. At the level of the *individual respondent*, it may be argued that one is dealing with real human beings, somehow

⁷⁶ Confer *Regulations for the degree of Doctor Philosophiae* (Dr. Philos), at the University of Bergen, §3: “The thesis: The dissertation should be an independent, scientific work at a high level of problem formulation, conceptual clarification, methodological, theoretical and empirical basis, documentation and presentation form”. *Source*: <http://regler.uib.no/regelsamling/show.do?id=227>. (Reading date: May 11, 2010).

underlining the individual empirical case. The main point, however, is that the content of the interviews are shaped by the questions focused. In this regard, the respondents are constructed by the researcher precisely through the set of questions asked—at least to a certain degree. Case studies may represent cases within cases, like individuals within different communities (cf. Ragin 1992). So what case is this study a case of? Flyvbjerg suggest that the answer to this question (also) may be in the hands of the reader of an academic text: “The goal is not make the case study be all things to all people. The goal is to allow the study to be different things to different people” (Flyvbjerg 2006:238). On the other hand, I presume it will be expected of the researcher to also have an idea about the answer to this question. For me it is logical that the answer to what this study case is, is related to the problem statement presented in chapter one: “What are the consequences for young single mothers and unemployed youth of being clients at local welfare bureaucracies?” For me this study is about “consequences for clients”, wherein this is illuminated by the four research elements presented in chapter one. Defining the study in this way also implies that the question of analytical generalisations is directly connected to the problem statement.

Comparison in this work relates to the three levels mentioned above: the individual respondent; categories of respondents; and communities. As outlined by Ragin (1987) and Tilly (1984) one may assign different meanings to the concept and objectives of comparison. With reference to Tilly (1984), one may argue that this work addresses comparison at a *micro-level*, where the objective is to give an account of the *uniqueness* of the cases, as well as focusing upon their *similarities*. The *purpose* of conducting comparisons in this work is to explore different conditions for how policy is turned into practice. When it comes to local frames, client experiences, judgments by local people and implementation forms, I employ a comparison concept that allows looking at the possibilities to find: similarities; distinctions; and variations in the character or intensity of a phenomenon (cf. Tilly 1984).

Research ethics

Addressing questions related to ethics is an important element of a research project. One reason for this is that research ethics have become institutionalised (King and Horrocks 2010; Mauthner et al 2002; Helgeland 2005). This means that committees on research ethics exist who produce ethical guidelines for research in a variety of academic fields. In Norway The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH)

has produced such guidelines since 1990 (De nasjonale forskningsetiske komiteer 2006). Some of these guidelines are related to the research community and involves themes such as scientific integrity, (avoiding) plagiarism, reference practices and respect for colleagues. My intention is to be open with regard to this aspect of research ethics by the information given and reflections performed.

Another part of research ethics, which is of utmost importance, is to show respect for the individuals that have participated in the research project. This means how the interview persons have been recruited and treated. A basic consideration is to protect the respondents against any kind of harm from participating in the research project. This means that the concept of ethics is related to the consequences for those involved in the project (cf. King and Horrocks 2010). Research ethics in this respect relates to the entire research process (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; King and Horrocks 2010), and has become important in the following stages of this work.

With regard to thematization the purpose of the research has not only been to illuminate academic questions, but also to improve public policies and the situation for vulnerable groups through the knowledge gained. This is an ethical dimension.

Concerning the recruitment of respondents I will stress the fact that it was voluntary to participate, and that no pressure was put upon the respondents to do so. To promote participation to the interviews by single mothers and unemployed youth payment was offered. The persons were offered NOK 200, if they agreed to be interviewed. The assumption underlying this decision was that a modest financial contribution would encourage them to participate. The intention behind this was to increase the possibilities of achieving a satisfactory number of interviews. This offer may have at least two different impacts on the potential respondent. Either it is looked upon as an incitement promoting participation, or it may be interpreted as an insult inhibiting participation. The experience was that no potential respondent stated unwillingness or refused to be interviewed because of this. The decision to offer payment has ethical implications. It may be seen as contradicting the principle of volunteerism (King and Horrocks 2010), but the modest sum offered must be taken into consideration here. Payment for participation may also be seen in a different way, namely that it functions to equalise the relationship between the researcher and the respondent, by trading time for money (Hollway and Jefferson 2000).

When it comes to the interviewing, the purpose of the interviews and how they were to be used and by whom were communicated to the respondents before the interviews started. Permission to use a tape recorder was always asked beforehand. The overall experience was that the respondents allowed the recorder to be used during the entire interview. This also means that ethical dilemmas concerning the (possible) use of “off the record”-information did not occur. This may, however, become an ethical challenge if respondents continue to talk about matters of relevance for the research questions after they have asked for the tape recorder to be turned off (cf. King and Horrocks 2010).

The respondents were promised anonymity and that their material would be handled confidentially. It is important during the interview to allow actual respondent to withdraw from the interview session (King and Horrocks 2010). This never became an issue during the interviews.

Concerning the transcriptions, the researchers had a common agreement handling them with confidentiality, and the secretary (in the 2000-2001 study) signed a form stating this. The tapes, files and the printouts have been stored in a secure way, and only the researchers mentioned herein have had access to them.

When it comes to reporting, the interview quotes are presented in such a way that anonymity is preserved: neither respondents nor communities are identified by their real names. The communities are nicknamed and the actual respondent is given a code (a letter and a number) which prevents their identity from becoming known to the reader. The use of quotes follows two other ethical principles as well. A thorough analysis of every single interview has been performed in order to ensure that the quotes (parts of an entire interview) represent something typical in context of the whole interview. I believe this is one way of treating the respondents with respect.

When presenting quotes I have omitted “oral blemishes” such as broken sentences and stuttering. The transcripts include such oral phenomena because of the principle of transcribing verbatim. I do consider it to be unethical (as well as unnecessary) to present quotes like that in the reporting stage (cf. Kvale and Brinkman 2009).

Conclusion: methodological reflections

In this chapter I have presented the research design, and given an account of the concepts of case studies and comparisons, as well as addressed issues related to research ethics.

I conclude this chapter by addressing some of the limitations connected to this study.

One limitation is connected to the fact that the study is a qualitative one. This means that the findings will have a limited range. Most likely the findings will be relevant primarily in relation to contexts that resemble those studied here. This indicates that one is looking for analytical generalizations rather than searching for “societal laws”. Rosenberg (1995) is sceptical towards the idea of “discovering” such laws since context and individual pre-knowledge is likely to vary.

Since the method used herein is qualitative interviews the source of insight into the research questions rests upon the statements by the respondents. A different or additional method could be observations, for example, of the interaction between clients and street-level bureaucrats and/or of clients performing work in activation programmes. This could have produced other types of knowledge and insights. The type of qualitative method chosen thus represents a limitation.

Finally, one should be aware of the capabilities and pre-knowledge of the interviewer in the “production” of data during interviews. The communicative relationship between the interviewer and the individual respondent has some impact on how much and what the actual respondent is willing to speak about in the interview. Other interviewers than those participating in the projects presented above might have contributed to a different interview content. This point is crucial to recognise in situations where there is only one interviewer performing the interviews (like in the 2005 study), and when several researchers conduct interviews (like in the 2000-2001 study).

The role of the qualitative interview researcher is generally that of the active participant, where one’s own pre-knowledge and relationship to the interviewed persons shapes, to a certain extent, the outcomes of the interviews. Instead of assuming one has found the “real truth”, the researcher must attempt to determine reasonable interpretations of the qualitative material, by focusing on methodological tolerance (Lakatos 1982). This means acknowledging that there, in principle, could be different reasonable interpretations of the

same material available, since each researcher “applies” his pre-understanding of the phenomenon to be interpreted⁷⁷ (cf. Geanellos 2000).

⁷⁷ Cf. the concept of discourse in chapter one.

CHAPTER THREE: THE LOCAL FRAMES – “THE FJORD” AND “THE BAY”

Introduction

The purpose of chapter three is to investigate the following research question, initially presented in chapter one:

- **What are the local frames with regard to client experiences, judgments of the clients and the implementation of the activation policy in the two communities?**

In accordance with chapter one I look into structures related to the local labour market, investigate local norms related to work and conduct of life, as well as the properties of the local street level bureaucracies. I end the chapter by presenting similarities and differences with regard to the local frames in the two communities.

Three main sources underpin this chapter. Statistical figures produced by Statistics Norway⁷⁸, prior and relevant literature on “the Fjord” and “the Bay” including contributions in the project report from what in chapter two was termed “the 2000-2001 study” (Heggen, Jørgensen and Djupvik 2003), as well as literature on similar communities. Finally, I also resurrect some of the interviews performed in 2000-2001.

⁷⁸ In order to make the anonymisation realistic I only state “Statistics Norway” as the source for those references that specifically are related to “the Fjord” and “the Bay”.

“The Fjord”

This coastal community is located in northern Norway. It is a small and concentrated community measured in demographic terms. From 1990 until 2005, the community has had just over 2200 inhabitants⁷⁹. “The Fjord” has no hamlets other than the centre of the community, which literally means that the entire population lives in a concentrated geographical area. Statistics show that close to 100% of the population live in the densely populated municipal centre, in the years 2000 and 2005⁸⁰. The centre of the community is rather transparent, as it only has one street where shops, industries and public offices are located.

Another characteristic of “the Fjord” is that the community is fairly isolated from other communities or towns, which implies that this community is *not* part of a functional region⁸¹—an aspect which makes daily commuting virtually impossible (cf. Jørgensen 2003a). Compared to “the Bay”, this community experiences a higher degree of demographic mobility. Figures from 2002 show that immigrants per 1000 inhabitants were 84.9 for “the Fjord”, while the figure for “the Bay” was 43.7. In 2002, 92.3 per 1000 inhabitants left “the Fjord”, and the corresponding figure concerning “the Bay” was 44.8⁸².

Concerning political alignment, “the Fjord” should be seen as a stronghold of the Labour Party. In the municipal council election in 2003, the Labour Party received 63.3% of the votes. The Conservative Party received 14.6%, while the Progress Party, the Centre Party and the Christian Democratic Party received no votes⁸³.

The local labour market

Fisheries and fish industries are by far the dominant industries in “the Fjord”, and has been the situation for several years. In 2000 more than 450 persons were employed in this dominant industry. Most were employed in the fish industries, which were all (6) located at

⁷⁹ Source: Statistics Norway.

⁸⁰ Source: Statistics Norway.

⁸¹ The concept of a *functional region* means herein a coherent spatial area concerning services, work places and place of residence (cf. Christaller 1966; Smith 1985). The primary point is that daily work commuting is practically possible/acceptable, in terms of travelling distance/time, within such a region. A functional region *may* comprise several municipalities, and *may* display a greater variety of job opportunities compared to the limitations of a single municipality within such a region.

⁸² Source: Statistics Norway.

⁸³ Source: Statistics Norway.

the centre of “the Fjord”. From 2000 until 2003, between 400 and 450 persons were employed in the fish industry, but after 2003 the fish industry in “the Fjord” experienced an economic crisis that resulted in bankruptcy for two of the firms and a subsequent decrease in the employment figures. Still, “the Fjord” is one-sided with regard to industrial structure⁸⁴.

The fish industry in “the Fjord” has undergone changes concerning the content of the work during recent years. A decreasing number of persons are engaged in fishing and the loading and unloading of ships. This work has traditionally been a male domain. The fish industry has, to a certain degree, become “feminised”, as it now is dominated by tasks like cleaning, cutting, packing and freezing of fish. This work is mainly performed by females (Jørgensen 2003a). (Cf. also a general description of gender-based division of labour in the fish industry performed by Husmo and Munk-Madsen 1994; Gerrard 1983, 1995 which points at the same pattern).

The fish industries employ assembly line technology, which for a segment of the local population is seen as monotonous, anti-social and hard work (Jørgensen 2003a). This description of conditions of work in the Norwegian fish industry has also been addressed by Husmo and Munk-Madsen (1994) in a general presentation of this type of industry.

In the past few years high proportion of foreign workers have become employed in the fish industry, from countries like Sweden, Finland, Russia and Sri Lanka. Some of these are in “the Fjord” for a short period of time, while others have settled down on a permanent basis. According to information obtained from the Local Employment Office, there has been an increase in foreign workers during the last 20 years⁸⁵. Figures show that 16.5% of the inhabitants in the year 2000 were foreign immigrants to “the Fjord”. This is different from the picture in “the Bay”, where only 4.5% of the population was foreign immigrants during the same year⁸⁶. The fish industry and the local authorities are able to recruit foreign workers to the core work, but the companies prefer a locally recruited work force since they look upon this as more stable labour.

The competition on an international market, and its corollary, the establishment of procedures for securing standards of quality, seem to have driven the fish industry in the direction of a

⁸⁴ Source: Strategic industrial plan (Strategisk næringsplan) for “the Fjord” municipality.

⁸⁵ The phrase “last 20 years” means approximately the period from 1980 until 2000.

⁸⁶ Source: Statistics Norway.

stricter production regime. This implies tighter control of the workers, more specialisation of work and less possibilities for unstable workers to stay on the payroll. Compared to the past, this indicates that the fish industry in “the Fjord” now has stronger mechanisms for the exclusion of certain segments of the work force (cf. Jørgensen 2003a). This process of change is also underlined by Jentoft in his general description of North Norwegian fish industry and fishery communities, and he links it to an increased globalization of the fish industry (Jentoft 2001).

In “the Fjord” there is a central office (lossesentralen) which employs people for loading and unloading ships, and from time to time it hires unstable youth as part-time workers (Jørgensen 2003a). Lossesentralen stores fresh, frozen and salted fish.

Traditionally the fish industry of “the Fjord” has offered tasks suited both for men and women. This means that both sexes have been used as paid workers in this community. Whenever the access of raw material from the ocean has been good, the fish industry has worked to its peak capacity. At such times all hands were needed for the production, and the workers earned good wages. There is a widely held belief in this community that everyone will get a job as long as one is willing to work in the fish industry.

The inhabitants are aware that the main industry and the community as well are vulnerable because of its one-sidedness. Lack of resources (raw material) occasionally means shorter periods of production, and workers have experienced layoffs and other related crises in the fish industry. This is a typical situation for the fish industry and fishery-dependent communities in general (Ådnanes 1994; Jentoft 2001).

This means that there most likely is an understanding among the locals that some workers may experience periodic layoffs. Unemployment is seen as a recurring phenomenon to which the local population is subjected by external forces. In such situations it is acceptable to seek help at the local street-level bureaucracies, as the client is perceived as not responsible for the situation.

Table 3.1: *Unemployment rate in the Fjord (1993 – 2005) in percentage of the work force.*⁸⁷

1993 (annual average)	1995 (1st quarter)	1998 (annual average)	1999 (annual average)	2000 (1st quarter)	2002 (annual average)	2003 (September)	2005 (annual average)
3.1	6.1	2.7	3.6	4.5	5.7	8.0	9.2

The table shows the unemployment rate for a period of 12 years, and demonstrates the fluctuations over time. Since 1998 there has been an increase in the unemployment rate, especially from 2002 to 2005⁸⁸. The figures with regard to individuals on social assistance are presented in the table below.

Table 3.2: *Individuals on social assistance in “the Fjord” (1993-2005), in percentages.*⁸⁹

	1993	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Percentage of 20-66 year olds on social assistance	7.5	8.3	7.7	8.3	8.7	9.0

Approximately eight percent of the 20-66 year olds are on social assistance over this time-span, and have slightly increased over the last few years.

Local norms related to work and conduct of life

Young persons’ relationships with the fish industry in “the Fjord” are changing. During the 1980s-1990s, youth had more interaction with the industries. The industries were more “open” to the public, and young persons had the opportunity to experience the work first hand (Jørgensen 2003a). (Cf. a general description of this phenomenon in the fish industry underlined by Jentoft, 2001.)

It was easier to obtain part-time work and jobs during the summer holidays. This is still an option, but not to the same extent as in the past. Youth seem to be reluctant to work in the fish industries, at least as a permanent work career (Jørgensen 2003a). Young men seem to devalue certain parts of this work, which they think is only suited for women or foreign immigrant workers, especially the Tamils. Other types of work and the pursuit of education seem to challenge the local norms connected to a work ethic underlining the willingness to

⁸⁷ Sources: The figure for 1993 information from an official at Statistics Norway, the figures of 1995-2000—the regional statistics of Statistics Norway, the figure for 2002—Statistics Norway, internet version, the figure for September 2003—information from an official at the Local Employment Office in “the Fjord”. The figure for 2005 is from Statistics Norway’s internet version. The variation between average of the year and first quarter is due to the way the regional statistics are presented by Statistics Norway.

⁸⁸ The relatively high figure for the year 2003 is connected to the fact that one of the main fish industry companies went bankrupt that year.

⁸⁹ Source: Statistics Norway.

work in the traditional fish industry, characterised by few possibilities for advancement. A young male worker, aged 23, may be an example of certain aspects of the younger generation's critical attitudes towards the fish industry.

If you do not continue at school, then it is the fish industry. It depends upon your interest if you want to perform that kind of work for the rest of your life. I do not want to work there. I think there are rather few who want to work there. I think it is a kind of "robot-occupation"; you do the same work operations all day long. I have worked in the fish industry (Respondent F-20).

The lack of interest for working in the fish industry by young people has been described as a general trend in North Norwegian fishery-dependent communities (Jentoft 2001).

Youth who want to obtain a higher education have to leave the community, as there are no local options beyond the secondary modern school⁹⁰. This means that a certain segment of the youth culture in "the Fjord" is absent from daily interaction, specifically the school-oriented ones who have to move to study. In recent years, there has been a decrease in the youth groups in "the Fjord", which means that the youth culture is comprised of rather few persons, and that the youth culture in this community is more homogenous than it was some years ago (Jørgensen 2003a).

The main division in "the Fjord" concerning youth is likely to be between those who are unemployed and the majority who get a steady job, primarily in the fish industry.

Traditionally it seems clear that education and schoolwork have had a low status in "the Fjord", partly because of good economic options related to working in the fish industries. High turnover rates and lack of skilled teachers are also a part of this picture, as well as the existence of a strong "resistance culture" among the pupils concerning schoolwork and the school as an institution. The lack of a prominent middle-class also means the lack of a strong segment of parents motivating their children to be school-oriented (Jørgensen 2003b).

Statistics show that the percentage of the population in "the Fjord" that has a higher education is substantially below the average of the country. In 2000, 21.3% of the population in Norway had a higher education, while just 8.8% of the population in "the Fjord" had such an educational background. In 2005, 9.5% of the population had such an education in "the Fjord"⁹¹.

⁹⁰ In Norwegian: Ungdomsskuletrinnet.

⁹¹ Source: Statistics Norway. The definition (by Statistics Norway) of higher education is the University and College level.

The community is small and transparent. This seems to have promoted certain traditions concerning the relationship between capital and labour in “the Fjord”. The companies and (potential) workers have in-depth knowledge of the local conditions, and everyone believes they know who is willing and able to work and where and when work is to be found. This has promoted *informal* job recruitment, which the following statement from a middle-aged worker illustrates:

There is a culture here that people on their own get in touch with the local companies in order to get a job. Those who want to work get in touch directly. Often the companies also get in touch with persons who they know are suited for the work. This is a small community, so they just pick up the telephone (Respondent F-24).

Motivated workers get in touch with the industries themselves, and this is the way that the work ethic of “the Fjord” is traditionally expressed and confirmed. Some see the Local Employment Office as a redundant intermediary, since one is inclined to believe that using this agency just confirms the lack of a work ethic or that the clients are unfit to find work.

The main point concerning the local work ethic is not necessarily the demand upon all members of the community to get a permanent job, but to accept and endure the limited types of work that “the Fjord” has to offer (Jørgensen 2003a). There is great pressure on people to accept the work of the *fish industries*. This acceptance defines what is normal to do in relation to work in this community.

The Christian life in “the Fjord” is characterised by few associations, and they do not engage much in missionary work within the community. In the northern part of Norway, one finds the pietistic movement of “Læstadianism”. Traditionally this movement has engaged in issues like teetotalism and strict sexual morals, such as rejecting sexual relations outside of marriage and encouraging bashfulness (Aadnanes 1986). This religious movement is not established in “the Fjord”. A probable reason for this may be that “the Fjord” is not part of the movement’s core areas in northern Norway (cf. Aadnanes 1986). One of the respondents, with relationship to the local church, expresses a liberal attitude towards single mothers:

I do not think it matters if you are alone with a child here in “the Fjord”. You may be a leader in the Christian associations no matter whether you are a single mother or if you are divorced. That is not an issue at all (Respondent F-45).

Properties of the local street-level bureaucracies

The local street-level bureaucracies are located on the main street of “the Fjord”, meaning that those entering the offices are fairly visible to others. Client position is also visible in other forms of behaviour, for instance when young men drive their cars through the main street all day long displaying that they are not at work. Since the community is small (measured in population figures) this also means that the street-level bureaucracies in “the Fjord” are small when it comes to the number of employed personnel. The Local Employment Office had only one employee at the time of the first interview period (years 2000–2001), and in 2005 there were two officials at the office. This means that the clients of this office will identify the office as this/these specific person(s). The Social Security Office has a couple of officials, and has had a stable and satisfactory personnel situation, according to the head of the office. This is in contrast to the situation at the Social Welfare Office. This office has had problems concerning their personnel situation; they have had key officials on long-term sick leave and continual staff turnover. One of the respondents at this office described the work conditions this way:

We are supposed to be five persons at the office: three officials and 1.5 persons as office help. Now there is just 0.5 person as office help and myself as the official. So we have been forced to reduce the opening hours, which mean that we close at twelve o'clock three days a week. We are all behind when it comes to the administrative work. We do not manage to cover it all. It is the social work plus child welfare (Respondent F-41)⁹².

The continual staff turnover referred to above is related to the fact that formally educated social workers have been recruited to the Social Welfare Office in “the Fjord”, but tend to leave that office and the community after a relatively short span of time. This trait resembles a finding reported by Lægreid and Olsen (1978) with regard to the central administration in Norway. Either the officials stay on and become socialised by the administrative apparatus, or they leave the organisation relatively fast.

During the period of the interviews the situation at the Social Welfare Office changed for the better, but still it is clear that both this office and the Local Employment Office seem to be vulnerable organizations in “the Fjord”. The shortage of organizational capacity is part of the local frames, and one that, first and foremost affects, the recipients of the services. Some of the officials at the street-level bureaucracies in “the Fjord” have lived for a long time in the

⁹² This quote is from the 2000-2001 study. In chapter five all interviews and quotes from the street-level bureaucrats is from the 2005 study.

community and do not have a social worker or a welfare professional background. Some of them have in fact been recruited from the fish industry—and this applies at all three offices.

“The Bay”

This community is located on the west coast of Norway. From 1990 until 2005, the community had approximately 6000 inhabitants, with a slight increase from the mid-1990s and at present has almost 7000 inhabitants⁹³. “The Bay” is comprised of a demographically dominant centre as well as adjoining hamlets. In 2000, figures showed that 79% of the population lived in the densely populated centre, and in 2005 that figure was 80%⁹⁴.

Concerning political alignment, “the Bay” seems more fragmented compared to “the Fjord”. In the 2003 municipal council election four political parties received the majority of the votes in “the Bay”: the Labour Party (23.2%), the Progress Party (17.0%), the Conservative Party (23.1%) and the Christian Democratic Party (17.3%)⁹⁵.

The local labour market

“The Bay” is, unlike “the Fjord”, part of a functional region. Bridges and tunnels have joined together four municipalities, all of which comprise a population of around 20000 inhabitants. This means that this community may be viewed as less transparent than “the Fjord” and it offers a more varied spectrum of job-possibilities compared to “the Fjord”.

Fisheries dominate the industry in the region where “the Bay” is located, but “the Bay” itself is dominated by shipbuilding, serving the fishery, transport and merchant fleets. This is a community with a tradition of local ownership of the industries. This has historical roots back to the 1800s and 1900s, where people of humble means were typical in this region, the people had to work hard to make ends meet and they lived under conditions which required additional incomes (cf. Heggen, Båtevik and Olsen 2000).

The industries in “the Bay” are vulnerable because of their one-sidedness. At some times there is high activity, at others, when the shipyards are lacking contracts, members of the work force may experience rapid changes in their situation and be laid off. This is similar to the situation in “the Fjord”. Those who live in “the Bay” know from experience that it sometimes is difficult for some people to maintain proper levels of income. The first wave of interviews were conducted (2000-2001) during a period with stable industrial activity. When

⁹³ Source: Statistics Norway.

⁹⁴ Source: Statistics Norway.

⁹⁵ Source: Statistics Norway.

the shipyards experience an economic crisis, there is a rise in the unemployment rate. The unemployment caused by such fluctuations in the economy is perceived as an external force, which imposes problems on the workers, and is not likely to be linked to individual “guilt” or lack of a work ethic.

Table 3.3: *Unemployment rate in the Bay (1993 –2005) in percentage of the work force.*⁹⁶

1993 (annual average)	1995 (1st quarter)	1998 (annual average)	1999 (annual average)	2000 (1 st quarter)	2002 (annual average)	2003 (September)	2005 (annual average)
3.5	2.7	0.9	1.4	3.9	2.4	5.1	3.4

The table shows the unemployment rate for a period of 12 years, and demonstrates the fluctuations over time. There is a marked increase in the figures from 2002 to 2003, and then a decrease in 2005. The figure for September 2003 is one of the highest for many years in this community, and was due to lack of contracts at the main shipyards⁹⁷. The figures with regard to individuals on social assistance are presented in the table below.

Table 3.4: *Individuals on social assistance in “the Bay” (1993-2005) in percentages.*⁹⁸

	1993	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Percentage of 20-66 year olds on social assistance	2.6	2.3	2.8	2.8	3.3	3.3

Around three percent of the 20-66 year olds are on social assistance over this time-span, and the level has been fairly stable, especially from 2002. Compared to “the Fjord”, there are relatively fewer persons in this community that have received social assistance in the years in question.

Local norms related to work and conduct of life

The region in which “the Bay” is located has been described as being characterised by an egalitarian economic ideology (cf. Tvinnereim 1992). This is valid for the period of industrialisation, which took place during the last century. The social division between owners of capital and the workers was not marked. This is something that has changed over

⁹⁶ Sources: The figure for 1993–information from an official at Statistics Norway; the figures of 1995-2000–the regional statistics of Statistics Norway; the figure for 2002–Statistics Norway, internet version; the figure for September 2003–information from an official at the Local Employment Office in “the Bay”. The figure for 2005 is from Statistics Norway’s internet version. The variation between average of the year and first quarter is due to the way the regional statistics are presented by Statistics Norway.

⁹⁷ The economic problems also affected suppliers who are dependent upon the activity at the shipyards.

⁹⁸ Source: Statistics Norway.

time in “the Bay”. New generations of leaders at the main companies seem to have a higher level of consumption than in the past. “The Bay” must generally be described as an affluent society (cf. Jørgensen 2003c; Wilhelmsen 2001). Statistics show that the gross income per inhabitant in “the Bay” is significantly above those in “the Fjord”. Figures⁹⁹ for the year 2000 showed that the average wage in “the Bay” was Nkr. 240.000, yearly and Nkr. 222.000 in “the Fjord”. These figures mask some important gender differences. In “the Bay” the average wage of the males was Nkr. 315.000, while the females earned 163.000. In “the Fjord” the average wage for males was Nkr. 258.000, and the females earned 183.000, on average¹⁰⁰. Quantitative measures and averages may obscure the fact that social and economic differences are a reality in “the Bay”. Interviews suggest the appearance of newly rich persons with conspicuous consumption in recent years. An indication of this is the establishment of shops in “the Bay”, with an assortment of goods and a price level unusual in a Norwegian rural district. There are even shops selling designer clothes for children in this community (cf. Jørgensen 2003c).

It is also suggested that there is a social division among young people in “the Bay”, which implies the formation of “cliques” and the phenomenon of social exclusion from the successful ones. One tends to affiliate with Christian youth associations, the elite sport culture and the unorganized youth (cf. Heggen, Jørgensen and Paulgaard 1999, 2003; Jørgensen 2003c). A concretisation of this is the “diagnosis” made by a respondent from the middle class:

The way I see it – is that the youth culture in “the Bay” is fairly polarized. You belong to groups and identify with groups. There is fairly tough pressure in this community to be seen as successful. You must wear the right type of clothes, have the right type of branded goods, and have sufficient amounts of money. This is something that characterises many persons, either consciously or unconsciously (Respondent B-45).

The shipyards are an important industry in “the Bay”, and are characterised as being technologically advanced. This means that companies demand a work force that is highly skilled. Figures from 2000 showed that more than 1200 persons were working in, or in connection with, this main industry¹⁰¹. The shipyards have their own work force, but also hire expertise from suppliers. Interviews suggest that the demands on performance of work in the

⁹⁹ Source: Statistics Norway.

¹⁰⁰ The figures then show that there is a more marked difference between the sexes concerning earnings in “the Bay” compared to “the Fjord”.

¹⁰¹ Source: Statistics Norway.

industries have increased in “the Bay”. Contrary to the situation in “the Fjord”, it is very difficult for young people to obtain temporary work at the main industries (Djupvik 2003). This in fact means that the mechanisms of exclusion within the dominant industry in “the Bay” are stronger than in “the Fjord” when it comes to formal access to the industries. The impression one gets from the interviews is that the respondents mostly accept that some have problems gaining a foothold in the labour market. Even if the work ethic is a well-known cultural property of this community and the norm is to get a steady job, it seems that it is more accepted in “the Bay” than in “the Fjord” that some have problems living up to such norms (Djupvik 2003).

Some of the interviews suggest that youth in this community do not perceive working at the shipyards as a high-status occupation (Djupvik 2003). On the contrary, youth are seen more interested in other types of work than the dominant one in “the Bay”. Youth are seen as oriented towards pursuing higher education, even if some of them prioritise differently (cf. Jørgensen 2003c). The secondary modern school in “the Bay” shows good exam results, and is well known for this. There is a junior college located in the community and two regional university colleges nearby. Statistics show that a high proportion of the population in this community has a higher education. Figures from 2000 show that 20.1% of the population in “the Bay”¹⁰² has a higher education, which is similar to the national average (20.3%) that year. In the 2005, 23% of the population in “the Bay” had a higher education. The national average in 2005 was 24%¹⁰³.

It is reasonable to say that “the Bay” is more oriented towards further education than “the Fjord”¹⁰⁴. In the interviews, it is stressed that the local schools have a good reputation, a competent and stable work force and a competitive system for achieving a position as a teacher. A strong middle-class implies a segment of parents who motivate their children to do well at the compulsory school, and prioritise higher education.

Traditionally “the Bay” is a community where lay Christianity has had a solid footing, and it is still possible to discover pietistic groups there. Still, it is clear that liberal attitudes towards

¹⁰² The figure of “the Fjord” in 2000 was 8.8%, and 9.5% in 2005.

¹⁰³ Source: Statistics Norway.

¹⁰⁴ It might also be mentioned that figures produced by Statistics Norway from the year 2000 showed that 89.3% of all persons in the age category of 16-18 years were undertaking educational training, while the figure for “the Bay” was 89.6%. That figure for “the Fjord” was 68.9%.

single motherhood are currently prevalent in this community, generally and among Christian societies. The general trend in Norway towards higher divorce rates and the extent of broken homes (especially since 1970)¹⁰⁵ implies that single parenthood is more common within a wide range of social circles than it was earlier.

Properties of the local street-level bureaucracies

The local street-level bureaucracies are located in the centre of “the Bay”. The Social Welfare Office is located in the municipal administration building along with other municipal agencies, and *had* a receptionist service and a separate waiting room¹⁰⁶. The Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office is located in separate buildings, some distance away from the municipal administration building. Some respondents suggest that it is fairly “visible” to others if you enter the offices. However, this is not a theme of concern in the same way as in “the Fjord”, where all street life is centred on the main street. The physical layout of the centre of “the Bay” is more complex.

Compared to “the Fjord” the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” are more stable and structurally advanced as organizations. The total number of employees in these organizations is markedly higher than in “the Fjord”, meaning that they appear more like “real” organizations and that the officials have a number of colleagues with whom to discuss different issues¹⁰⁷.

The Local Employment Office had at that time 14 employees all together, who were organized in teams. The teams were oriented towards companies and the individual unemployed. One of the teams collaborates with local companies to give youth a chance to get work. There was one official who had a special responsibility to work with youth and single mothers. The head of the office expressed satisfaction with the personnel situation, which also implied that this office had the relevant competence.

The Social Security Office had all together seven-eight employees, and the personnel situation was described as good. This office had stable and varied competence judged by the way

¹⁰⁵ Source: Statistics Norway (<http://www.ssb.no/histstat/aarbok/hf-020203-052.html>. Reading date: July 13, 2010)

¹⁰⁶ Some years ago, the Social Welfare Office, due to organisational changes in the municipal organisation, got a new reception which they share with the rest of the municipal organisation.

¹⁰⁷ This does not imply that all of the employees at the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” were equally relevant to recruit as respondents, cf. inclusion criteria discussed in chapter two.

respondents at the office saw the situation. The officials are specialised for different categories of clients, such as single providers and those who are reported sick.

At the Social Welfare Office, there were all together eight-nine employees. The head of office reported competent personnel in the fields of child welfare and social work (formally educated social workers). The officials at this office seem to have undergone a process of specialisation, focusing on tasks such as child welfare, the functionally disabled and those with drug and alcohol abuse. The office has had a project position devoted to preventive work among youth.

Local frames: comparing “the Fjord” and “the Bay”

Similarities

Both communities are located on the coast, and dependent upon a vulnerable industry. Generally, there is a commonly held belief in both communities that there is work available for those who are willing to perform. Both communities experience recurrent economic crises in the main industries, and this has led to a local understanding that workers occasionally experience being out of work. However, this is something that is connected to a belief that unemployment is mainly forced upon the work force, save for the long-term unemployed. This implies that seeking help at the local street-level bureaucracies for some is legitimate. Recurring and short-term unemployment may also mean a dramatic change for some of the workers. Those who see recipients of social assistance, for instance, as persons who are opposing the work ethic may feel negatively towards seeking help at the Social Welfare Office, as they then might be associated with a low status clientele. Both communities are also one-sided concerning industrial structures, but this is even more so in “the Fjord” than in “the Bay”. Unemployment figures and figures on social assistance show differences between the two communities. It is, however, a deviant position in both communities to be either unemployed or on social assistance. In *neither* of the communities is it apparent that the Christian culture is a strong moral institution condemning single motherhood. In both communities, there is a *secular work ethic* that most likely guides segments of local people in the way they judge the young clients, especially those who are unemployed.

The specifics of “the Fjord”

The concept of “the Fjord” may be seen as a metaphor underlining that this is a community that is isolated and “narrow” concerning job opportunities and the norms connected to work. First, to be judged as basically a strong or weak person is likely to be related to the willingness to work at the dominant fish industry. This depends upon the dominant industries, but also upon a weak middle-class in this community. This means that a local type of a secular and traditional work ethic is likely to be a guiding normative force behind how clients are judged in “the Fjord”.

Second, the lack of pietistic Christianity in this community will supposedly make single motherhood acceptable, as long as they are working. Third, the size of the street-level

bureaucracies in this community makes it likely that the office and the officials almost are identical. This is of importance when analysing how the street-level bureaucrats in “the Fjord” implement the activation policy. These are officials with the possibility of developing local knowledge of clients and families with whom they work closely (cf. the references to Walle 1991; Hovik and Myrvold 2001, Lichtwarck and Clifford 1996; Haugland 2000 in chapter one). In addition, it is possible that they will identify with the local norms concerning the importance of being willing to work in the fish industry, since this industry is very dominant. It is possible that the norms connected to the fish industry pervade the weak street-level bureaucracies due to the lack of professional social worker background for some of the bureaucrats. Structural aspects of the street-level bureaucracies in “the Fjord” may imply that they come close to what Lichtwarck and Clifford (1996) termed “the local community oriented Social Welfare Office” and “the profession-less Social Welfare Office”.

Fourth, the traditional way of obtaining work in this small community should be underlined; the perception of strong human beings is through the informal network between potential workers and the local companies.

The specifics of “the Bay”

The concept of “the Bay” may be seen as a metaphor underlining that this is an open community, which includes other social milieus, job opportunities and norms concerning work as well as a wide range of educational possibilities. The educational possibilities in and in connection with “the Bay” are highly accessible. The functional region attachment plays down the role of one-sided industries in this community, since alternate jobs might be found in the neighbouring communities (cf. the references to Sunley et al 2006; Gordon 1999 in chapter one). The one-sidedness of the industries in “the Bay” creates vulnerability for those dependent upon the work at the shipyards, but it does not strongly define the repertoire of local jobs. The middle-class has a strong position there, which might indicate that a segment of the locals have distanced itself from a secular industrial work ethic.

Traditionally pietistic Christianity has had a solid footing in this community, which may imply negative judgments of single mothers on religious grounds. This is something that will be examined in the coming chapters, i.e., if this is a typical trait at the present.

The development of an affluent society with a growing emphasis on conspicuous consumption among the well off, and those who identify with them, underlines the possibility

for economic polarisation in this community. In “the Bay” it not just important to get a job and thereby display ones work ethic, there is also a certain pressure to be able to present oneself as economically successful.

The street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” are solid organisations compared to those in “the Fjord”. This means, for instance, that a certain amount of local knowledge of individual clients and their families may be limited because there is an organisational capacity to deal with this situation. It can be believed that the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay”, as opposed to the ones in “the Fjord”, because of the organisational strength and professional background of the officials are not likely to be pervaded by local norms and knowledge. The implication of this is that implementation of the activation policy at the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” is more likely to rest upon organisational and professional properties than on local ones. Structural aspects of the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” may imply that they come close to what Lichtwarck and Clifford (1996) termed “the legalised Social Welfare Office”.

Figure 3.1: *Main aspects of the local frames in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”*

	“The Fjord”	“The Bay”
The local labour market	Narrow and isolated	Wide due to functional region attachment
Norms related to work and conduct of life	Strong position of industrial working class and secular/traditional work ethic Informal mediation of work Weak position of pietistic Christianity	Strong position of middle class and middle class norms Formal mediation of work Traditionally strong position of pietistic Christianity
Properties of local Street-level bureaucracies	Relatively small and typically un-professionalised	Relatively large and typically professionalised

CHAPTER FOUR: THE JUDGMENT OF CLIENTS BY LOCAL PEOPLE IN “THE FJORD” AND “THE BAY”

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the following research question, initially presented in chapter one:

- **How are young single mothers and unemployed youth judged by people locally as clients with the local welfare bureaucracies?**

The outline of the chapter is as follows. A presentation of some main characteristics of the respondents constituting local people in the two communities will be provided. Then I identify the main discourses on single mothers and unemployed youth in the way they are judged by the respondents in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”. As local people at the outset have one trait in common, that they are employed, I suggested in chapter one that their judgments of the clients are likely to be related to the following criteria: work ethic; willpower; and conduct of life. In chapter one it was also suggested that the judgments of the client are likely to be connected to stigmatisation and social acceptance. Stigmatisation of clients is likely to occur if local people judge the young clients as breaking with local norms in relation to work, i.e., if the client position is judged to be a replacement for participating in the local working life. Social acceptance is more likely to occur if the client position is judged to be “combined” with living up to the relevant local norms.

“The Fjord”

A presentation of the respondents

The young workers

In “the Fjord” ten young workers were interviewed, five women and five men. The youngest one was 22 years old and the oldest 29. They had lived in the community for several years, and had relatives in “the Fjord” as well. The respondents had experiences in the fish industry, some were employed there and others were working in shops. They have had stable relationships with their families and the compulsory school, and have participated in organised leisure activities while younger. Some of them can be described as school-oriented. One of them had been in a deviant position while growing up, related to drug abuse and affiliation with a drug culture (F-17). Generally, the ten young workers support the work ethic of “the Fjord”. Working at the fish industry is not necessarily seen as desirable by them, but one is expected to endure it if no other jobs are available. The young workers, by and large, believe that there is work to be found in the community, at least in the fish industry, for everyone who *wants* to work. The young workers display judgments towards the single mothers and the young and unemployed, but to a lesser extent reveal insights into or opinions on the local welfare bureaucracies.

The middle-aged workers

In this category of respondents, nine persons were interviewed: three males and six females. They were in their forties or fifties and had grown up children. The respondents in this category have lived in “the Fjord” for several years, some all their lives. Some of them worked in the fish industry, and the remaining in private service occupations. Since they were employed, they tended to see the value of being at work, and thus support the work ethic of “the Fjord”. However, they differ in the way the work ethic directs them in their judgment of the young clients, especially towards the young and unemployed. The work ethic is defined in relationship to the core work in “the Fjord”, which means that working in the fish industry is expected to be endured by the work force. On the other hand, the middle-aged workers are aware of the burdens of this kind of work, especially when it is seen as a long-term industrial career. Working in the fish industry, or knowing the content of its work, implies recognition of the need during the career to report as sick or being on rehabilitation and thus deserving of certain types of public support. The middle-aged workers display judgments towards the

single mothers and the young and unemployed, but to a lesser extent reveal insights into or opinions on the local welfare bureaucracies. A segment of these respondents had rudimentary experiences in the past with the local welfare bureaucracies.

The middle-class

In this category of respondents, eight persons were interviewed: two males and six females. They were in their forties and fifties, and had grown up children, who were school-oriented, and whose parents supported the pursuit of taking on a higher education. The middle class respondents obviously have a higher education themselves, and worked in organisational contexts such as the municipal administration, the local compulsory school and the municipal health sector. F-34 was a politician and a former Chairman of the Municipal Council in “the Fjord”. These respondents have lived in “the Fjord” for several years; some have lived there all their lives. The middle-class respondents display judgments towards the single mothers and the young and unemployed, but as will be shown, they are not homogenous. This category of respondents seems to have more insight into the functioning of the local welfare bureaucracies, compared to the young and middle-aged workers. This most likely is due to their having contact with the welfare bureaucracies as part of their work. The middle-class respondents commented upon norms, values and cognitions they see as prevalent in the community, as well as presenting their own judgments. There is no information in these interviews suggesting that the middle class respondents have any personal experience as clients with the local welfare bureaucracies, save for F-36 who had been on sick leave.

The judgment of clients in “the Fjord”

The judgment of single mothers

The worthiness discourse

The sole judgment discourse on the single mothers is “the worthiness discourse”, which is recognized among young and middle aged workers, as well as the middle class. The basic content of this discourse is the belief that the single mothers in “the Fjord” are living up to the local work ethic and that they, at the same time, are staying away from the abuse of drugs and other forms of negative conduct of life. It is furthermore underlined that Christianity is not a denouncing force in the community towards single motherhood. This means that the client position as a single mothers is judged as worthy—they deserve their statutory rights from the local welfare bureaucracies (basically the Social Security Office) –as they are taking care of a child, as a category are generally considered as less well-off than the average in the whole population (cf. Halvorsen and Stjernø 2008), they are believed to not be replacing work by entering a client position, and sometimes show interest for taking on an educational career. It is underlined that it has been usual for single mothers in “the Fjord” to be at work, including at the fish industry.

In order to illustrate this discourse I shall refer to the judgments of respondents F-18, F-25 and F-33¹⁰⁸.

F-18 was a *young worker* at one of the fish factories in “the Fjord”.

Either you get yourself an education or you get pregnant. It has been usual for years that young girls get pregnant and then they either work in the fish industry afterwards, or they leave the community to get an education. They would not be able to live a life at all if they did not get the financial support. Maybe it is not right that a very young girl gets a baby so early in life, but it is not the baby’s fault. So the baby must have a secure environment, so then it is reasonable to give financial support – it is rather a question of how much one ought to receive (Respondent F-18).

F-25 was a *middle-aged worker*. He was from “the Fjord”, and worked in a service occupation at the time of providing his responses.

There are many single mothers here, but I don’t see that they have a drug problem. The attitudes here are supportive, in other communities there may be greater problems because of the attitudes of Christian associations. The Christian associations here are not numerically vast and they are quite anonymous. I think it is an exaggeration to

¹⁰⁸ Similar judgments were found among respondents F-13, F-14, F-15, F-23, F-26, F-27, F-28, F-29, F-32, F-35 and F-37. See appendix 4.1.

believe that some choose single motherhood as a strategy to avoid certain types of work. The fish industries have their own kindergartens, so they are able to get them into working life. I don't think it has been a problem (Respondent F-25).

F-33 was a *middle class* respondent. She had lived in “the Fjord” for almost 30 years . She was educated as a teacher, and had in the past worked in the local school for a couple of years. At the time of providing the responses, she worked for the PPT-office¹⁰⁹ in the municipality.

Most single mothers are working in “the Fjord”. This community is a society where women have always been at work. There is no tradition here for staying at home, so a single mother works. It is obviously the case that you need the money. I think single motherhood is accepted here; at least this is not a major topic around here, anyway (Respondent F-33).

The community of “the Fjord” is transparent, which means that the respondents believe they know personally how single mothers act, and some of these respondents also have some single mothers as colleagues in the fish industry. This is probably a driving force behind the worthiness discourse.

The conditionality of worthiness

The respondents also underline when a single mother “hypothetically” does not deserve public support and thus not to be judged as worthy in the client position—if she abuses drugs and participates outside of the local working life. An argument formulated by young worker respondent F-19¹¹⁰ illustrates the conditions where worthiness is jeopardized.

Some couple of years ago there were many single mothers who just went to the Social Welfare Office and received financial support. But I think that you are not ill just because you give birth to a child. You should be able to work, and when you are 16 years old you know what it is all about. You are supposed to take responsibility for what you have done (Respondent F-19).

¹⁰⁹ PPT stands for *Pedagogisk psykologisk teneste*. This is an office which helps pupils with a variety of learning problems. Its professional basis is psychologists and pedagogues.

¹¹⁰ Similar judgments were found among respondents F-16, F-17, F-18, F-20, F-21, F-31, F-34 and F-36. See appendix 4.2.

The judgment of unemployed youth

The laziness discourse

The most critical judgment discourse on the unemployed youth is the laziness discourse, which is directed towards young clients that are believed to be long-term unemployed. This discourse is identified among young and middle aged workers, as well as the middle class. Even if the community of “the Fjord” is defined by the respondents as “transparent”, the laziness discourse is not necessarily based upon individual or personal knowledge of specific young unemployed clients.

The fundamental content of this discourse is that young unemployed clients are believed to replace participation in the local working life (mainly the fish industry) with a client position, primarily with the Social Welfare Office. One believes that these young clients form a subculture where it is common not to work, and that there is work to be found in the fish industry for those who are willing to perform such jobs. To appear on the list of potential workers produced by the Local Employment Office is, furthermore, judged as a confirmation that one is not really willing to work. This “truth” relates to the practice in “the Fjord” where informal mediation of work is the traditional way of expressing the industrial work ethic of this community (cf. chapter three). One believes the welfare offices in “the Fjord” make few demands on their young unemployed clients, who are characterised as having fake health problems and, consequently, are surrounded by suspicion in the community. This also implies that laziness is not only a predominant and protracted trait regarding some of the clients, but that “lazy clients” also negatively label the services that might be rendered to “honest” clients, i.e., those who have worked for the fish industry and are in need of rehabilitation programmes, among other services. Some of the respondents also state that they are personally provoked by these “lazy” clients.

In order to illustrate this discourse I refer to the judgments of respondents F-13, F-26 and F-35¹¹¹.

Young worker respondent F-13 had a job in a grocery store, and her boyfriend worked in the fish industry.

You shall not use the Social Welfare Office! That is the last resort here in “the Fjord”! No matter what! If you go there, then you are really down. That is the last thing; it is embarrassing to put it bluntly. I know people who have a weak economy, but there you have the divide. Some people go there and get everything, furniture for example. But

¹¹¹ Similar judgments were found among respondents F-14, F-16, F-19, F-20 and F-21. See appendix 4.3.

that is people *who never have been acting otherwise*. Those who have some pride, on the other hand... I can understand that some do not have a choice, but it is so embarrassing. You have to go somewhere to get food and money – it is so awkward for you to do it. The marihuana gang does not hesitate to use the Social Welfare Office. Rather go there, than to work. They have their own culture that supports each other. *They do not care*. (...) If you get the list from the Local Employment Office, you know that it consists of people who are unfit to work. *Those who are unwilling to work, they get put on that list*. They have to apply for jobs, and I know some who have applied for jobs at our shop, just because *the Local Employment Office has told them to do it*. This was just because he should not lose his allowance. He wrote an application on a crumpled piece of paper, indicating that he was not really interested in getting the job. He knew precisely what he was doing. There is always something about those people, chronic headache etc. I look at those who do not endure and those who have no choice. *I do not like those who can't stand working*. Some people are just hypochondriacs, and get reported sick just to avoid working. You know of those persons. If you are able to work, then you should be working. *If you have shown willingness to work, and then gotten in to problems, then it is fully accepted* (Respondent F-13).

Middle-aged worker respondent F-26¹¹² had lived in “the Fjord” for 20 years, and worked in a service occupation at the time of providing his responses.

It should not be necessary for youth to go to the Social Welfare Office, because there is work in “the Fjord”. I don't know anyone using the office, *but I can imagine*. Some do maybe need some guidance in steering their private economy. They should receive some help to be able to steer their own economy. The help you may get from the Social Welfare Office, which is related to problems in the fish industry, is more accepted. I believe that; because then it (i.e.: the client status) *is not your own fault*. But of course there are other ways to manage; for instance by negotiating with your Bank. (...) The record you get from the Local Employment Office is not very positive. *Those appearing on that list are mainly those unwilling to work*. It is people you know are not considered stable workers and people who drink too much. *It is better to employ persons who ask for work themselves*. (...) Being on rehabilitation is something else. There is a difference between being a *råttstokk* and someone who really has tried, but cannot manage the job. If you have been honest and really tried, then it is accepted. This is a small place, so you know people personally: “that guy is a damned *råttstokk*”¹¹³; he does not want to do anything” (Respondent F-26).

Middle class respondent F-35¹¹⁴ had lived in the community for 20 years, and worked as a teacher in “the Fjord” at the time of provided the responses.

I think people in “the Fjord” condemn them on moral grounds. I believe there are attitudes implying that the young and unemployed only receive support, without giving anything back. It is so easy to go to the Social Welfare Office and get money. They are not met by demands, and then they become persons who basically make trouble. *I do to a great extent*

¹¹² Similar judgments were found among respondents F-23, F-24, F-28 and F-30. See appendix 4.4.

¹¹³ The north-Norwegian dialectical word “*råttstokk*” refers to someone seen as a lazy person, and the literal translation would be fairly close to “a rotten log”.

¹¹⁴ Similar judgments were found among respondents F-27 and F-32. See appendix 4.5.

support these attitudes. The welfare bureaucracies ought to demand more of them; *making them perform work for instance* (Respondent F-35).

The complexity discourse

Among some of the respondents, it is possible to discover a discourse on the young and unemployed clients that is different from the “laziness” discourse. I call it the complexity discourse, and it is also found among young and middle aged workers as well as the middle class. The basic content of this discourse is that the respondents within it cannot really figure out what *the* reason for their being a young and long-term unemployed client is, or that they do not have any knowledge on the matter whatsoever. For those respondents that have an opinion on the background of being a young long-term unemployed client, the main point is that they do not consider this to be related to a single factor explanation. It might be related to affiliations with peer-groups, their family and their situation in the compulsory school.

Those who refrain entirely from judging the clients have no social networks with them, while those who point at the difficulties with regards to the reason for being in the client position have various forms of networks with these clients, as part of their work, through their grown children or because they themselves have been affiliated with subcultures during adolescence. In order to illustrate this discourse I shall refer to the judgments of respondents F-17¹¹⁵, F-36¹¹⁶ and F-29¹¹⁷.

Young worker respondent F-17 was 27 years old, and stated that she was abusing drugs and had served time in prison while she was a teenager. She had worked at the fish industry in “the Fjord”.

F-17 thought that it is important to show willingness to work and that one should do something in return for monetary support received from the Social Welfare Office, but she points to the *variety* of possible *reasons* for entering the local drug culture, and becoming a client.

I would say there could have been things that have happened to them, as individuals. It may also be related to their families. Then again, you have those where you really are unable to see any reason for it at all. They have just been hang-a round’s and then joined the culture. I have many friends that have been abusing drugs (Respondent F-17).

Middle class respondent F-36 was an engineer, and her husband worked at the fish industry. She had some knowledge of the young and unemployed clients via the social networks of her

¹¹⁵ Similar judgments were found among respondents F-18, F-22 and F-25. See appendix 4.6.

¹¹⁶ Similar judgments were found among respondents F-33 and F-34. See appendix 4.7.

¹¹⁷ Similar judgments were found among respondents F-15 and F-37. See appendix 4.8.

grown children. F-36 had some knowledge of a variety of reasons behind being a young client of welfare services, and also commented upon the judgments of the young and unemployed found in the community and the role of the compulsory school, rather than expressing an individual judgment on the young clients.

I know some since they are friends with my children's friends. They are around the age of 20, and work sporadically at the *Lossesentral* (loading and unloading ships), and then they are registered at the Local Employment Office. They have problem finding a place to live. Some of them have a drug problem, but my grown-up children do not accept that. I think the school did too little to help direct them, and then they began to perform a lot of mischief. The school should to a larger extent have showed them where the limit goes concerning accepted conduct. So this is a problem in a small community like "the Fjord"; *they get black listed* (less opportunities to get work) (Respondent F-36).

Middle aged worker respondent F-29 stated that she had limited knowledge of the young and the unemployed clients. She was not very interested in them, either. This implies that she was indifferent to the young clients of services. F-29 was from the municipality, and had lived in the centre of "the Fjord" for more than 10 years. She had grown children who were pursuing an educational career.

I don't know much on the help they may receive; I am not much into this. I have not had anything to do with it. Maybe some people think that the young and unemployed are lazy, *but I really don't know*. I have heard of some young and unemployed persons, but *I really don't care about it*. This is found everywhere. I don't know what the local welfare bureaucracies do to help them (Respondent F-29).

“The Bay”

A presentation of the respondents

The young workers

In this category of respondents, eight persons were interviewed: six males and two females. The youngest ones were 19 years old and the eldest was 29. Five of the respondents were working at shipyards, while the others were working in private services. The respondents in this category had taken some education beyond the compulsory level, and some of them were motivated for further studies, and they had parents and siblings living in and working in the community. The eight young workers had either grown up in “the Bay” or had at least lived most of their lives there. They experienced an uncomplicated adolescence, and most of them had participated in organised leisure activities while growing up.

The young workers supported the work ethic of this community, but did so in a less adamant way than certain of the young workers in “the Fjord”. Some of the young workers in “the Bay” stressed the “fact” that there is work to find for everyone who wants to work in this community.

The middle-aged workers

In this category of respondents, nine persons were interviewed: four males and five females. They were in their forties or fifties, and have grown children who were either working or had obtained further education after the compulsory school. A segment of the respondents reported having past experiences with the local welfare bureaucracies.

The respondents in this category had lived in “the Bay” for several years, some all their lives. Six of them worked in the local shipyards, and the remaining in private service occupations. Since all were employed, they tended to see the value of being employed, and therefore generally supported the work ethic of “the Bay”. However, they differed in the way the work ethic directed them in their judgment of the young clients, especially towards the young and unemployed.

The middle-class

In this category of respondents, 12 persons were interviewed: seven males and five females. Most of them were in their fifties, and had grown children who were school-oriented, and whose their parents supported the pursuit of obtaining a higher education. The middle class respondents obviously have a higher education, and worked in organisational contexts such as

the local school, the municipal health sector, administrative positions at the shipyards and the municipal administration.

The respondents in this category had lived in “the Bay” for several years, some all their lives and they appeared to have more insight into the functioning of the local welfare bureaucracies than the young and middle-aged worker-respondents. This was probably because some of them had contact with the welfare bureaucracies as part of their work. There is no information in these interviews suggesting that the middle-class respondents had any personal experience as clients with the local welfare bureaucracies. The middle-class respondents commented upon norms, values and cognitions they see as prevalent in the community, as well as presenting their own judgments. Even more so than in “the Fjord”, the middle-class respondents in “the Bay” adopted the position of the analyst; expressing less individual judgments on single mothers and the young and unemployed. Compared to “the Fjord”, the middle-class respondents in “the Bay” displayed more of a homogenous approach to the judgment of the two client categories. A special feature concerning most middle-class interviews in “the Bay” were the comments upon *the newly rich*, related conspicuous consumption and its alleged effect upon the less well off, i.e., also single mothers. This was a topic which did not arise in the interviews with the young and middle-aged workers.

The judgment of clients in “The Bay”

The judgment of single mothers

The worthiness discourse

This is the sole discourse among young workers, middle-aged workers and the middle-class in “the Bay” with regard to the judgment of single mothers. The basic content of this discourse is that single mothers in this community are judged to be worthy clients if they are willing to work, take on an educational career and stay away from the abuse of drugs. Furthermore, the respondents within this discourse believe that at present there is no denunciation of single mothers on religious grounds in “the Bay”, which implies that the “combination” of client position and marital status (single motherhood) is not an issue of concern among the locals “anymore”. As part of this discourse there is also the argument that single mothers deserve public support because they are taking care of a child on their own—which is seen as both a responsibility and a financial challenge. The judgment of single mothers as worthy clients is, however, conditional; the public support should be transitory and surrounded by demands by the local street-level bureaucracies.

In order to illustrate this discourse I shall refer to the judgments of respondents B-21, B-29 and B-45¹¹⁸.

Young worker respondent B-21 was from “the Bay” and worked at the time of providing these responses at a shipyard. He judged single mothers by the way they related to drug abuse and education.

It is up to you how you want to live your life. I know of young girls who have been single mothers, but not engaged in drugs. It is people who have managed well. They are studying now. I have no problem with single motherhood (Respondent B-21).

Middle-aged worker B-29 worked at a shipyard. He believed that there were liberal judgments of single mothers with regard to their marital status in “the Bay”, meaning that living in a broken relationship does not mean single mother clients are to be judged negatively.

I don’t know this issue in detail. They get help from the local welfare bureaucracies. Some come from a resourceful family, and others are not so fortunate. My impression is that it is more accepted *today* than before to get a child out of wedlock, and I believe more women get into that position than in the past. When I grew up¹¹⁹ there was more

¹¹⁸ Similar judgments were found among respondents B-22, B-26, B-27, B-28, B-32, B-35, B-37, B-39, B-42, B-43 and B-47. See appendix 4.9.

¹¹⁹ This respondent was in his sixties at the time of the interview.

moral denunciation towards women who received an illegitimate child. Then you heard stories about this (even) from the neighbouring municipality ... Today I believe there is a better welfare apparatus serving single mothers compared to the time of my adolescence (Respondent B-29).

Middle-class respondent B-45 was from “the Bay” and he was at the time he provided his responses a principal at a local school. He judged the single mother clients to be worthy because they deserve public help as they are alone with a child.

This is a category that needs the welfare bureaucracies the most, because they are *alone* with a great *responsibility*. You know how much hard work it is for two parents, when you think of how much the children has to be supported, and then they sit there all by themselves. So it is quite natural, in my opinion, that they need the support (Respondent B-45).

The conditionality of worthiness

Respondents within this discourse also addressed when a single mother client is *not* judged as worthy. *Middle-class* respondent B-38¹²⁰, who worked for the municipal organisation, states that this is related to unemployment and conduct of life.

If you think of single mothers who are just at home, and who do not do much else. Some of us might then think they are taking our tax money, at least some of them. But it depends really on for *how long* you are unemployed, and how you live your life and what kind of reputation you have (Respondent B-38).

In certain of the *middle-class* interviews, another theme arose concerning how single mothers are judged, in addition to the themes of unemployment and conduct of life. This has to do with what might be called the “*educational project*”, which means the norms connected to the pursuit of obtaining further education beyond the compulsory school level. If single motherhood is seen as a substitute for something, which impedes such a career, then it is judged as something negative. *Middle-class* respondent B-46¹²¹, who worked in the administration of a shipyard, illustrates this line of thought.

I know some single mothers who are at home, who have not completed any kind of *education*, and live on what a partner or the welfare state supports them with. And I know single mothers who have very good jobs and are on very good wages (Respondent B-46).

¹²⁰ Similar judgments were found among respondents B-20, B-23, B-24, B-25, B-30, B-31 and B-34. See appendix 4.10.

¹²¹ Similar judgments were found among respondents B-38, B-39 and B-45. See appendix 4.11.

Economic distance: worthiness jeopardised?

Economic distance implies that certain individuals in society cannot afford the things that others can (Spicker 2007).

The *middle-class* respondents pointed to the social and economic division among the population in “the Bay”, which also might imply a form of worthiness conditionality related to economic distance. This division seems to have been accentuated lately as some of the leaders and local shareholders of the main companies in the community display their wealth more openly than did previous generations. Even if it is recognised that parts of their capital are used for reinvestments, more conspicuous consumption is observed than in the past. These respondents stressed the need to be seen as successful in an economic sense in this community. It should be underlined that it is not the middle-class respondents who hold these judgments. One appeared to believe that “the newly rich” create an atmosphere which defines a level of consumption, and there will most likely be persons who identify with this level of consumption and the values connected to it. It might be argued that there is a local form of a “high society” that indirectly defines the material standard of living for other social categories in “the Bay”. This social and economic division has an *alleged impact* on the less well off in the community, such as single mothers (cf. also Halvorsen and Stjernø 2008). When children of the rich and the poorer meet in school, even as early as kindergarten, this monetary division becomes visible through the price level and brand of children’s clothes (cf. chapter three). This division is also visible due to the rural properties of “the Bay”. People do not live in a west or east end; rather they live in neighbourhoods where the rich and the less well-off tend to live side by side. The point is this: the single mothers *may* be judged as a social category that is less respected than others because they, to some extent, will be seen as relatively poor—even if they are not unemployed. *Middle-class* respondent B-41¹²², who in the past had worked in the local school but at the time of providing responses held an administrative position at a shipyard, illustrates this line of thought.

Imagine a single mother coming to a parents meeting in the school, where the issue is an excursion to England, at the cost of 5000 Nkr. All the parents are excited about it. They will not say “no”, because they want the best for their children. I was myself in that position once. Then I said “no”, I am not going to pay for that. Not because I couldn’t afford it, but because I thought it was right to make a stand. Because I knew that there were other parents who couldn’t afford it (Respondent B-41).

¹²² Similar judgments were found among respondents B-36, B-40 and B-45. See appendix 4.12.

The main point concerning economic distance is that the bureaucratic label “single mother” may emphasise a category of individuals that have less economic resources than what is normal or “average” in “the Bay”.

The judgment of unemployed youth

The laziness discourse

Among young worker and middle-aged worker respondents in “the Bay”, it is possible to discover a judgment discourse related to the young and unemployed that I call the laziness discourse. This discourse has some similarities with the laziness discourse identified in “the Fjord”, but it differs in the sense that this type of discourse in “the Bay” is not linked to a specific form of work and it is not represented in the middle-class interviews. The general content of this discourse is that the young and unemployed clients are judged to have replaced working with establishing a client relation with the local street-level bureaucracies, especially the Social Welfare Office. This office is also judge as an office supporting “the lazy” and one believes that it does not make any real demands towards the young and unemployed clients. If a client has a drug problem this is not primarily seen as an illness, but as a chosen way of conducting one’s life. This also implies that to be included in this discourse means that one is provoked by young unemployed clients because they are not living up to the same work related norms as the respondent. The respondents within this discourse do not personally know young and unemployed clients, but believe that laziness is the main cause behind being in the client position. This then means that specific knowledge of individual clients is not necessary for judging them. In order to illustrate this discourse I shall refer to the judgments of respondents B-25 and B-30¹²³.

Young worker respondent B-25 was 19 years old, and worked in a grocery store.

I believe they are people who *can't face working*. I look down on them a bit. I mean; when you may get a job and you have nothing to complain about. When you have the offer (of a job), then I think it is a bit unnecessary to go to the Social Welfare Office *and say that you can't face it*; just getting a sick leave for nothing. I think that is unnecessary. *I don't know any young person who is a client with the Social Welfare Office* (Respondent B-25).

The strongest criticism towards the young and unemployed as well as the local street-level bureaucracies came from *middle-age* respondent B-30. He was in his forties, had no education beyond the compulsory school, had been a sailor and worked at one of the shipyards in “the

¹²³ Similar judgments were found among respondents B-19, B-26 and B-27. See appendix 4.13.

Bay”. B-30 looked upon the young and unemployed in the light of the local work ethic, which implies judging them as lazy and weak persons. B-30’s own experiences with the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay” have made him believe that this office is for the support of the permanently lazy in the community. He was also sceptical towards the local Employment Office, but believed that the Social Security Office was a different matter.

Personally I turn up my nose if I know that this guy can manage to work if he wants to, because I have always been working, and have never thought of being a *slye*¹²⁴. I am quite tough on that. Because I think of how much I work and struggle, and when I was at sea I worked 18-20 hours at a stretch, struggled like hell and the reward was to pay a lot of tax. *Just to support the gang who sit at the Café, go to the Social Welfare Office, pick up their money and then spend it on alcohol.* (...) The Social Welfare Office – that is a bloody bad system. Those who *do not do a damned thing* get everything, while those who keep the wheels turning and are in the need of a little help, they get nothing. It is an unfair system. When I was at sea once, the fisheries were not all that good. My wife could not pay all the bills coming in, despite the money I sent her. Then I told her that she might ask for some help at the Social Welfare Office, and she did. They asked her: “Do you have a car? No, you have to get rid of that car, and then you will manage to turn the corner.” But she needed the car to drive our kids to the school and the kindergarten, and besides she had a job she was trying to keep. To go to the Social Welfare Office is the last thing you do, *the last chance*. (...) The Local Employment Office is just a lot of paperwork and stuff; they do not do a damned thing. It was in the local newspaper; they are 11 persons employed there. Who is paying them? 11 persons just to keep track of some PCs and paper; what the hell are all of them doing? The Social Security Office has to do with sick leaves and things like that; it functions well (Respondent B-30).

The complexity discourse

A major discourse on the judgment of the young and unemployed clients in “the Bay” is what I call the complexity discourse. This discourse is found among young worker, middle-age worker and middle class respondents. It is very typical among the respondents from the *middle-class*. The basic content of this discourse is that it is difficult for these respondents to judge the young and unemployed clients in “the Bay”. Some of the respondents acknowledge not having insight into the matter because they have no personal knowledge of the clients, so they then refrain from judging at all. Typically, these respondents do not have a reason for getting to know the clients either. Other respondents within this discourse either believe that it is difficult to understand the reason for becoming a young and unemployed client at all, or that at a minimum there is a multifactor explanation to this question. In addition, they hold the belief that clients’ problems and abilities are not permanent, and they have the ability to change their life. Then some of the respondents also believe that properties of the local street-

¹²⁴ The term *slye* is used in the west coast of Norway, and may be translated as a lazy person.

level bureaucracies are part of the picture when judgment of clients is the case. The main point is that the complexity discourse is not related to perceived aspects concerning the individual client, and instead of judgment in the shape of suspicion and accusations towards the young clients, one is moreover inclined to question the reason for judging clients. Respondents within this discourse are “aware” of other types of judgments of the young clients in “the Bay”, for instance that they might be “labelled” (cf. Becker 1963, 1974) as weak or “lazy”.

In order to illustrate this discourse I shall refer to respondents B-20, B-29 and B-46.

Young worker respondent B-20¹²⁵ was 22 years old and worked at a shipyard. He was aware of probable negative judgments of the young and unemployed clients in “the Bay”, but this respondent had little knowledge of these clients and refrained from judging them.

I guess there are those in the community who think it is OK to *get money for nothing*. And others who think that it is a bit strange. Just like parasitism. Then a lot of people say: “we are paying for them”. It is a bit awkward for those who work and pay their tax. I don’t care too much about it. I don’t get too involved in it. I don’t. I get a little information. *I don’t ask around for more information; I don’t bother* (Respondent B-20).

Other respondents within this discourse try to provide a variety of possible reasons for becoming a young and unemployed client. *Middle age* worker B-29¹²⁶, stated that he knew some of these clients personally. He points at the possibility that becoming a client is related to family ties (social inheritance) and/or linked to alcohol abuse. He suggested that these clients should be helped by local street-level bureaucracies, and that they should be given demands from the bureaucracies and that the individual clients do have the potential for making changes in their own lives.

I know some of them. I guess they got a bad start in life, since the father did not have a steady job, and because of alcohol abuse. With a bad start in your own family, this may become a problem for you later in life. I think some people condemn them on moral grounds, saying, “I don’t want to pay for such a lazy guy”. *That is what I react most to, that some people don’t want to help*. You should not go to the Social Welfare Office all the time, without trying – you have some responsibility yourself. (...) I have learned through a long life that there is something in all of us. No matter how hopeless it may look, *there is always something a person is good at*. If you are able to see that, and build on it a bit, then you might just have doubled the potential (Respondent B-29).

¹²⁵ Similar judgments were found among respondents B-21, B-24 and B-35. See appendix 4.14.

¹²⁶ Similar judgments were found among respondents B-22, B-23, B-31, B-32, B-33, B-34, B-36, B-37, B-38, B-42, B-45 and B-47. See appendix 4.15.

The respondents with similar judgments as B-29 have one thing in common; they try to “list” a variety of possible reasons why some young persons in the community have become clients.

Then there are some respondents within the complexity discourse in “the Bay” that have a different approach to the complexity issue than those referred to above. Instead of providing a “list” of possible reasons for becoming a client, rather they focus on the challenge related to understanding this phenomenon altogether. Middle-class respondent B-46¹²⁷ illustrates this judgment or viewpoint.

Even if I know pretty much about the background for being young and unemployed, I am *not* quite *able* to *analyse* what it *is*. I see youth who are relatively weak in *resources* and maybe also with some of the modern diagnosis. And you have relatively resourceful youth who wind up in that position. There is nothing wrong with the intellectual capacity, stamina or being clever at school: they are on the downward path. Maybe it has to do with the home, the lack of structure and good role models in the family; things that have happened in the past. To give an answer - that is not up to me (Respondent B-46).

Part of the complexity discourse is also, as mentioned above, to consider properties of local street-level bureaucracies. In this respect, I shall refer to middle-class respondents B-40 and B-41. B-40 was an engineer who worked at a shipyard, and B-41¹²⁸ had previously worked in the local school, but for 20 years had worked in an administrative position at a shipyard in “the Bay”.

I think that the public agencies have too little resources to be able to deal with cases like this, in a good way (young and unemployed with an additional drug problem). It costs enormous amounts to follow them up, but it costs more not to do it (Respondent B-40). I don’t know so much about the Social Welfare Office. But the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office in “the Bay” are very clever. They are solid and have a good cooperation with companies. They are flexible and help youth get a footing in the local industries, by paying some of their wages (Respondent B-41).

We observe in the quotes above a certain dualism when taking the bureaucracies into account. B-40 points at shortcomings related to the local street-level bureaucracies—that they are not able to help the clients in an adequate way¹²⁹. B-41¹³⁰, on the other hand, paints a different picture, underlining the success criteria of the local street-level bureaucracies, such as relationships with local companies in the work-mediation process and the possibility of subsidising work. Therefore, to incorporate traits of the local bureaucracies into this discourse

¹²⁷ A similar judgment was found among respondent B-44. See appendix 4.16.

¹²⁸ A similar judgment was found among respondent B-39. See appendix 4.17.

¹²⁹ Cf. “the low bureaucratic efficiency discourse” presented in chapter six.

¹³⁰ A similar judgment as with B-41 was found with middle class respondent B-39. See appendix 4.17.

implies to underline the multifactor explanation approach rather than to stress individual properties of the young and unemployed clients.

Conclusion

In the previous pages, I have systematically presented judgment discourses towards single mothers and unemployed youth in the two communities. Three distinct discourses have been identified:

- The worthiness discourse—related to the judgment of single mothers in both communities.
- The laziness discourse—related to the judgment of unemployed youth in both communities.
- The complexity discourse—related to the judgment of unemployed youth in both communities.

The *worthiness discourse* is related to single mothers. This discourse represents social acceptance of the client position by local people in the two communities. This means that the single mothers are seen as “people like us”, because they live up to relevant local norms. A basic element in this discourse is that single mothers are accepted because they combine the position as clients with the Social Security Office with either being at work or studying. It is also noteworthy that the single mothers in both communities are judged as worthy receivers of services since they are taking care of a child on their own, and that they are considered as less well off than other categories in the community.

The worthiness discourse in “the Fjord” is related to single mothers’ acknowledged willingness to work at the fish industry and that it has been typical for single mothers to work in the fish industry across generations, cf. the arrangement with kindergartens at the fish industry. The worthiness discourse is also based on the belief that the single mothers are staying away from abuse of drugs and that, neither in the past nor at the present, religious denunciation of single mothers exists.

At present in “the Bay” the worthiness stems from the belief that single mothers are willing to adapt to work in general, that they are staying away from the abuse of drugs and that there is no religious denunciation of single mothers. “The Bay” is a community where the middle-class is prominent, and therefore the middle-class respondents connect worthiness to the willingness of the single mothers to consider pursuing an educational career. The theme of economic distance underlined in the middle-class interviews pointing at single mothers having

less income than the average, and obviously below the wealthiest groups in “the Bay”, may represent a procedural consequence for the single mothers: their position as clients that might underline an inferior economic position.

The *laziness discourse* is directed towards young and unemployed clients and implies stigmatization of clients because they are negatively labelled, as they are believed to be unwilling to work and they replace working with being a client at the street-level bureaucracies. The notion of “replacement” is common for the respondents within this discourse in both communities. Another common element in this discourse when comparing the communities is: the respondents within this discourse do not know any “lazy” young clients themselves, but are provoked by them. These respondents also believe that the clients’ problems are “fake”, indicating health problems and drug abuse is a chosen lifestyle, and not a real problem deserving public relief. Furthermore, these clients are seen as clients at the Social Welfare Office, which in both communities are judged as offices that do not make any demands towards these clients.

The specifics of “the Fjord” concerning the “laziness” discourse is that it is related to these clients’ alleged unwillingness to work at the fish industry, which means that “work” is translated as what is found at the fish industry. In addition, to be affiliated with the Local Employment Office is seen as an indication of “laziness”, as those appearing on the “list” of available workers is believed to be those who are unwilling to work (i.e., the long-term unemployed). This should be related to the traditional practice in “the Fjord” of informal mediation of work where motivated and capable workers found work from their own initiative or were recruited directly by the fish industry (cf. chapter three). In “the Fjord”, the respondents within this discourse clearly maintained that there is work to be found in the community for everyone that wants to work. These clients are also believed to be stigmatized by the services they receive support from.

The indications of “the Bay” are that this discourse is related to work in general, which could be a reflection of the fact that this community is located within a functional region, and that this discourse is not found among the middle-class.

The laziness discourse has a more profound footing in “the Fjord” compared to “the Bay”.

The *complexity discourse* is also directed towards the young and unemployed clients, and represents a form of acceptance from local people—but is different than the acceptance of single mothers. The young and unemployed clients are not seen as “people like us” by local

segments , as these clients are out of work and have problems with alcohol and drugs. The acceptance is linked to something else: that some clients have complex problems of a “real character” that deserve public relief, and that they are judged as “enigmas” that deserve to be better understood.

In “the Fjord”, some of the respondents within this discourse have little insight into the reasons behind young people as clients and long-term unemployed. These respondents then recognize that it is difficult to form judgments of the clients and state that they do not have any opinion on the matter. Further, there are respondents that have some sort of connection with these clients, either through their occupation, the social networks of their grown children or because they know of similar situations in the past. These respondents are able to state a reason for becoming an unemployed client: affiliation with deviant subcultures; trouble in school; or because they are blacklisted at the local companies in the fish industry. The primary aspect here is the multifactor explanation approach.

In “the Bay”, a divide exists among the respondents within this discourse; between those who know little about the matter and are uninterested in knowing anything about it—they refrain from judging these clients at all—and those who state that they are able to see what has created the client career, at which point a multiple set of reasons are suggested. Finally, some of these respondents are willing to try to reason on the question, but have to admit that it is an enigma to determine what the causes are. A specific element in the complexity discourse in “the Bay” is incorporating the street-level bureaucracies, in the sense that the offices are also given a responsibility or are part of the picture.

The complexity discourse has a more profound basis in “the Bay” compared to “the Fjord”, as the middle-class is more dominant in “the Bay” than in “the Fjord”.

Figure 4.1: *The judgment of clients by local people in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”*

	“The Fjord”	“The Bay”
Judgment of single mothers	The Worthiness discourse (Basics: single mothers judged as willing to adapt to the fish industry, staying away from drugs, no religious denunciation)	The Worthiness discourse (Basics: single mothers judged to be willing to work in general, staying away from drugs, no religious denunciation)
Judgment of unemployed youth	The Laziness discourse (major) (Basics: unemployed youth judged as unwilling to work in the fish industry, The Local Employment Office serve lazy clients) <i>The Complexity discourse (minor)</i> (Basics: no knowledge on unemployed youth, multifactor explanation approach)	<i>The Laziness discourse (minor)</i> (Basics: unemployed youth judged as unwilling to work in general, discourse only found among working class) The Complexity discourse (major) (Basics: no knowledge on unemployed youth, multifactor explanation approach, “enigmas”, street-level bureaucracy part of the picture)

CHAPTER FIVE: STREET-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION IN “THE FJORD” AND “THE BAY”

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the following research element, initially presented in chapter one:

- **How do the street-level bureaucrats at the local welfare bureaucracies implement the activation policy towards young single mothers and unemployed youth?**

I begin this chapter by discussing the concept of street-level implementation, followed by a preamble to “the Fjord” and “the Bay”. Then I present the respondents from the street-level bureaucracies. Afterwards, I analyse how implementation takes place in relation to single mothers and unemployed youth at the three bureaucracies. Since the interviews with the young clients (cf. chapter six) and the street-level bureaucrats in 2005 show that single mothers generally have relations to the Social Security Office and unemployed youth to all three offices, this is then the frame for presentation and discussion in this chapter—*the single mothers are analysed as clients with the Social Security Office only and unemployed youth with all of the three offices - in both communities.*

The chapter ends with a conclusion summarizing the main findings. The purpose of this chapter is to pave the way for the final chapter, where I shall partly discuss street-level distinctions in the two communities and what kind of implementation discourses that might be identified.

Street-level implementation

In chapter one I addressed the concept of implementation and its use in this study. Implementation means how a state policy is carried out in a specific way and what kind of effects it has (Winter 2003). With reference to Winter (2003) and Meyers and Vorsanger (2003), implementation of the activation policy by local street-level bureaucrats involves these dimensions: classification of clients; actions (what kind of programmes clients are linked to); and what consequences for the individual is likely to occur related to how one is classified and processed by local street-level bureaucracies.

This threefold concept of implementation is combined with central aspects of the street-level bureaucracy theory (cf. Lipsky 1980; Prottas 1979): categorisation; rubber stamping; referrals; psychological costs; stigmatisation; and creaming. How do these street-level aspects relate to the concept of implementation employed in this work?

The first dimension of implementation is *action*. To work with clients means to communicate with them through personal encounters as well as to refer clients to programmes, the local working life and other agencies of the welfare state. With regard to street-level aspects, psychological costs and referrals can clearly be linked to the action dimension. Psychological costs point at the specific interaction between a client and a street-level bureaucrat, and the concept captures negative sides of this encounter as seen from the perspective of the client—especially when the interaction represents “pressures and indignities” (Lipsky 1980:94). Referrals are a street-level aspect that clearly is linked to the action dimension, since this concept directs our attention towards what is done with clients: they may be referred or not. If they are referred between agencies or towards the working life, the main question is how this happens.

A second dimension of implementation is *classification*; the cognitive work that is related to beliefs on typical client traits and what is to be done with them. Street-level aspects like categorisation and rubber stamping are clearly linked to this. Categorisation means to assign clients to bureaucratic and professional categories, as well as to form normative assumptions with regard to clients. Rubber stamping is a secondary form of categorisation; this concept captures the practice where street-level bureaucrats base their judgments and decisions upon previous and “biased” reports on the clients completed by other street-level bureaucrats.

A third dimension of implementation is *consequences* of being classified and processed by street-level bureaucrats. Concerning street-level aspects, creaming and stigmatisation seem likely to represent consequence dimensions. Creaming means that some clients out of the total client population are, for various reasons, prioritised by street-level bureaucrats. Stigmatisation also represents a consequence as this concept points at the negative consequence for clients of being assisted by street-level bureaucracies, either in the form of labelling from the bureaucrats or due to systemic properties of the agencies of the welfare state (cf. Colton et al 1997). Their reputation in the community (cf. Spicker 1984) also has repercussions on certain clients.

Above I have attempted to combine a perspective on implementation with Lipsky's coping strategies. In this empirical chapter, I use the three-fold concept of implementation (actions, classification, and consequence) as a way to structure the presentation and analysis of the empirical material. The reason behind this is that this three-fold concept represents a broad approach on how implementation takes place, which is appropriate in the qualitative research where it is central to ensure that the empirical data is allowed to "speak" to the researcher and reader. Lipsky's perspectives will then be linked to the empirical findings when found relevant. The analysis of the street-level bureaucracies is, at the outset, in some way more complicated than the analysis of client experiences and how local people judge the clients, as three offices are involved and because of the threefold concept of implementation. I will, therefore, suggest at the end of this chapter what types of discourses grow out of the analysis of the empirical material.

Preamble to “the Fjord”

When analyzing street-level implementation in “the Fjord”, findings from the previous chapters seem relevant to mention at the outset. In chapter three it was underlined that the industrial structure of “the Fjord” is dominated by the fish industry. This represents a constraint for the street-level bureaucracies when it comes to implementing the activation policy in this community, as there are few job opportunities available outside this industry (cf. Sunley et al 2006).

Chapters three and four addressed central local norms related to the working life and conduct of life. There is a strong working class culture in this community, which implies that acceptance of working at the local fish industry is the main work-related norm, and that deviance from it is negatively judged. This norm has traditionally been expressed by informal job finding, in that the Local Employment Office is not seen as a necessary agency in such processes, but rather is connected to the individual’s initiative.

In chapter three structural properties of the local street-level bureaucracies in “the Fjord” were presented. All three offices have relatively few officials employed, which implies that they are vulnerable and contain a low level of complexity. The office and the official are likely to “coincide”, which means that the client is expected to be dependent upon one specific street-level bureaucrat. This also implies that the street-level bureaucracies in this community have restricted organizational capacity to deal with relationships between the office and a client that is seen as problematic. The Social Welfare Office has experienced a continual challenge related to turn over in some positions, and as a result it has been difficult to recruit and keep professionally educated social workers. For shorter periods of time this expertise is present, and sometimes professionals like this are absent (cf. Walle 1991; Hovik and Myrvold 2001; Haugland 2000).

In chapter three it was suggested that the street-level bureaucracies resemble what Lichthark and Graham (1996) termed “the local community oriented Social Welfare Office” and “the profession-less Social Welfare Office”. Because of the structural properties mentioned, and the fact that some of the officials have been recruited from the fish industry, one might at the outset suggest that the strong work-related norms of “the Fjord” (cf. chapters three and four) also might influence the local street-level bureaucracies in this community.

Preamble to “the Bay”

In chapter three it was underlined that the industrial structure of “the Bay” was dominated by the shipbuilding industry, but that the functional region of which “the Bay” is part plays down the practical consequences of this with regard to implementation of the activation policy. This means that the labour market in the region does not represent a constraint in the same manner as in “the Fjord”, since a more varied spectrum of jobs are available within acceptable commuting distance (cf. Sunley et al 2006; Gordon 1999).

Chapters three and four discussed central norms related to the working life and conduct of life. In the past, it seems reasonable to argue that pietistic Christianity had a solid presence in “the Bay”, which may result in negative judgments of single mothers. Findings in chapter four, however, suggest that this belongs in the past, and that more liberal judgments related to religious norms dominate at the present. Chapter four also suggested the prevalence of work-related norms that imply that one should support the work ethic (cf. Weber 2001). However, the work ethic of “the Bay” is of a general character and not linked to a specific industry. Unlike the situation in “the Fjord”, the findings in chapters three and four do not suggest that there is a traditional informal job finding process in “the Bay”. It is also worthwhile to re-emphasize the strong position of the middle-class in “the Bay”, which in various ways may represent a distinction towards a working class work ethic (cf. Hill 1992, 1996; Yankelovich and Harmon 1988; Herman 2002; Izzo 2001).

In chapter three structural properties of the local street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” were presented and identified as larger and more complex than those in “the Fjord”, which implies that the official and the office do not by necessity, coincide. There seems to be an organizational capacity to deal with relationships between officials and clients if they are defined as problematic. Since the offices are larger in terms of number of officials, this also implies organizational properties such as internal turnover. The personnel situation at “the Bay” Social Welfare Office is quite different from “the Fjord”; one has managed to recruit and keep professionally educated social workers in the relevant positions. In chapter three it was suggested that the street-level bureaucracies resemble what Lichthark and Graham (1996) termed “the legalized Social Welfare Office”, where distance to local norms and influences were typical.

“The Fjord”

A presentation of the respondents at the street-level bureaucracies

At the *Social Welfare Office*, respondents F-38 and F-47 were interviewed. F-38 had lived all her life in “the Fjord”. She had at that time worked at the Social Welfare Office for more than 20 years. Previously she worked 12 years in an administrative position in the fish industry, and obtained a job at the Social Welfare Office because she was laid off from the fish industry. F-38 had no social worker education. Her educational background was from the primary school, and later from a commercial school¹³¹.

F-47 had, at that time, worked at the Social Welfare Office for two years, and she and her family had decided to move away from “the Fjord”. She was from the west coast of Norway, and had a social worker education as professional background from a three-year college education achieved in western Norway in 2002. F-47 was at the time the responses were provided also interested in further education (social work), and had completed a course at a master level prior to her appointment to the Social Welfare Office in “the Fjord”.

A striking feature concerning the normative expectations of F-38 and F-47 towards their clients is connected to traits of the young clients, and the problem they have obtaining jobs locally. The young clients at this office are generally seen as *blacklisted* by the local companies, *unfit* for working in the fish industry, and have gained a bad reputation in the community. They are also seen as in need of being helped by the Local Employment Office to find work, but the chances of getting a local job are seen as meagre because of perceived traits of the young and unemployed.

At the *Social Security Office*, respondents F-40 and F-43 were interviewed. F-40 had lived in “the Fjord” for many years, and had at that time worked at the office for almost 20 years. She had a college education in the field of administration and leadership. F-40 displays normative expectations that appears to be rooted in the activation policy the office is set to carry out and seems to set aside her personal norms: the clients should define their own goals related to work and education.

F-43 had at that time worked at the office for more than 20 years, and she was from “the Fjord”. For many years F-43 worked in the fish industry, but had to leave it because of a back injury, when she then started working at the Social Security Office. One of F-43’s primary areas of work was related to single mothers. F-43 is to be considered an advocate of the local

¹³¹ The Norwegian term for commercial school is *handelskole* (Kirkeby 2001:957).

fish industry, which was seen by her as a type of work the young clients ought to tolerate. Her normative expectations towards the clients were embedded in the local work ethic, and she stated: “They should not say that they can’t stand the fish industry. What is wrong with the fish industry? That’s just as good as any other type of work” (Respondent F-43).

At the *Local Employment Office*, respondents F-42 and F-46 were interviewed. F-42 had lived all her life in “the Fjord” and had worked at the office for many years. Her husband worked in the fish industry. She was educated at the comprehensive school level. F-46 had moved to “the Fjord” from another Scandinavian country where she had been working for an airfreight company and had at that time, worked at the Local Employment Office for three years. She was college educated in the field of business administration. F-42 and F-46 held general and policy rooted normative expectations towards the young clients. The organisational belief is to aid the client in finding work and an employer, not to guide them into a specific occupation. The local frames imply, however, thinking in terms of the fish industry. Both may be seen as officials who expect the young client to be able to make up his or her mind concerning work, and thus the agency “demands” *strength* from the clients.

Street-level implementation of the activation policy in “the Fjord”

Single mothers and the Social Security Office

Actions

At the *Social Security Office*, bureaucratic control concerning the *access rules* to the services appears to be a striking part of the work with the young single mothers, as well as follow-up routines relating to the goals and duration of the activation policy programmes. The most important information needed by the office on them is the documentation of marital status—that they in fact are single. This means the office requires a document that confirms the separation, and additional information from the registration office that shows the single mother is living alone. When the young clients, like the single mothers, are working, this bureaucratic type of work appears to dominate, as mediation to work then is an irrelevant issue.

When the young *single mothers* apply for the benefit, then they have to document what is needed. Those who have children below the age of three, I have to call them in for a meeting; because then it is required that they at least are 50% at work or are undertaking an educational programme. When a single mother has a child which is close to the age of three, then I call her in to remind her that the period of financial support is soon coming to a close – if you are not applying for jobs, at work or undertaking an educational programme (Respondent F-43).

Classifications and consequences

Single mothers are described as by and large either being at work or undertaking an educational programme. When they are seen as conforming to the activation policy (i.e., working), then their social background seems to be of little importance to the office. When F-43 classifies the single mothers she points at traits related to family relation –that they have themselves grown up with a single parent, as well as their relationship to the working life. It is clear that F-43 believes it is a good thing to conform to the local labour market of “the Fjord”.

It is a pattern that they have grown up with a single parent themselves; but not all of them of course. I think *we* have been very *fortunate* here, because the single mothers are either working or getting themselves an education. They are very *clever* at getting a *local job* (Respondent F-43).

What might the consequences be for single mothers that are processed by the Social Security Office in “the Fjord”?

F-43 states that as an official she does not have a problematic relationship to the single mothers, and she believes no disgrace is seen in being attached to the office. Furthermore,

strict bureaucratic rules governing the services are believed to *prevent* a troublesome interaction between the official and the single mothers, as there is no uncertainty concerning the question of entitlement to services.

I think I have a very good relation with the girls. I don't feel that they think it is embarrassing to come to the office. They come here and talk and ask about everything; I think we have a very good relation. I think they are very open-minded, and they say "hello" whenever we meet in the street. I think it is important for single parents that the *rules* are very *strict*; so you know what you are and are not entitled to (Respondent F-43).

F-43 believes there is a major divide between the Social Security Office and the Social Welfare Office, which is relevant regarding consequences for the single mothers. The Social Welfare Office is seen by F-43 as serving the *lazy* in the community, and not really providing their clients with *demands*. F-43 believes that it has become trendy for young persons in "the Fjord" to become affiliated with the Social Welfare Office, and that these *young* persons do not have a legitimate reason for seeking help there.

The Social Security Office is, on the other hand, seen as serving those legitimately and rightfully *deserving* support from the welfare state, something that logically "produces" positive consequences for the single mothers.

There is a great difference between the Social Welfare Office and us. They help people who do not satisfy the conditions at the Local Employment Office or at our office. *Earlier* it was a *disgrace* to be with the Social Welfare Office, but it is *trendy* today for young persons to go there. They think all they have to do is just to show up there. The Social Welfare Office used to be an office for people in need. Now they are living on the office – *sound and healthy youth!* They are not met by demands there. It ought to be more like it is here; we meet our users with demands. *It must be a clear condition that you are willing to work.* It is my opinion that the Social Welfare Office should not feed *lazybones*, you may go there if you are in real need. (Respondent F-43).

Unemployed youth and the three offices

The Social Security Office

Actions

F-40's work with her clients is connected to the *individual plan*¹³², which is documented by the employer of the individual worker. The main content of the plan appears to be information on what has been done at the work place, and the possibilities for improving the worker's situation. Social or family background seems to be an irrelevant theme with regard to such plans.

We require an individual plan from the employer. It is a standardised form, where the employer has to document that they have tried replacements or technical remedies. We use the standard plan in a dialogue on the possibilities for future work. We don't ask, like the Social Welfare Office does, questions *on social matters* or on the family background. We are focused on what might be done at the work place (Respondent F-40).

In certain situations, this office participates in the organisation of *basis teams*¹³³, which aim at directing young and marginalised clients towards employment through motivational work and cooperation with the Local Employment Office and medical expertise.

If they are young, then we deliberately try to grab hold of them so that they don't drop out. Then we also use the "basis team", where the doctor and the Local Employment Office participate – to try to find solutions for the user, and sometime also motivate the person in mind. The most important thing we engage in is counselling and registration procedures. The Local Employment Office tries to find placements, and they also administer the work-related rehabilitation service; we only examine the medical conditions for entering that service (Respondent F-40).

Classifications and consequences

Young clients requiring assistance from the *Social Security Office*, besides single mothers, were described in the following way. To be "tired of school" may be seen as a "state", and it is believed that being a client at the Social Welfare Office is a "contagious" economic

¹³² An *individual plan* aims at giving long-term users of health and social services individually adapted and coordinated assistance. This type of plan was introduced in Norway in 2001 and 2004. Source: Stortingsmelding nr. 14 (2002-2003).

¹³³ *Basis teams* were generally a coordinative body which the Social Security Offices used when deciding whether a client should receive disability pension or go through the process of rehabilitation, and was thus related to persons that were on long-term sick leave. This organizational arrangement was suggested to be implemented in an Official Norwegian Report (NOU 1986:22). In this report, permanent members of a basis team were proposed to be the doctor of the client, an official from the Local Employment Office and an official from the local Social Security Office. The report also provided that the organization and function of the basis teams should take "local needs" into consideration, which, for instance, implies that officials from the Social Welfare Offices also might participate. The report also underlined that the client should decide if he approved that his case be treated in basis teams.

adaptation among these youth, and not a sign of a real problem. It is also possible to interpret F-40 in the following way: becoming a young client at the welfare bureaucracies may be seen as a replacement for working in the fish industry. This represents a certain way of understanding the young clients of services in this community—becoming a young client at the Social Welfare Office and at the same time not working in the fish industry, as well as showing unwillingness to move away from “the Fjord”, is seen by F-40 as lack of willpower.

One similarity is that they are tired of the school. This means that they are dropping out. Then it seems like it gives a bit of a status among young persons to seek help at the Social Welfare Office. It seems like it does not matter whether the wage comes from a job, the Social Welfare Office or from The Social Security Office. It is a small place; it is *contagious*. Some of them do not want to work in the fish industry, and many of them do not want to move away from “the Fjord” (Respondent F-40).

At the Social Security Office F-40 underlined that there is little turnover among the personnel, which results in the clients do not have to change officials often, and this is believed to contribute to a positive “interactional” experience for the clients. Respondent F-40 presents herself as a rule follower, and displays a different understanding (than F-43) of how the strict set of rules at the office affects certain of the young clients. Those who do not understand the access rules at the Social Security Office are believed to benefit from what is perceived as vague rules at the Social Welfare Office—where these clients easily obtain financial support from an agency that does not place demands on them. It is also clear that these mutual clients are believed to be somewhat weak, since they are judged to be dependent upon third parties, such as medical-professional expertise and the Social Welfare Office.

A second aspect of F-40’s statement is the revelation of her as an official who believes she has in-depth knowledge of clients and their families. The context she presents is that she believes she shows consideration in her interaction with the young clients, and thus reduces psychological costs in the bureaucracy-client relationship.

We have an internal division of labour at the office, which means that the users *don't have to change official all the time, and we have very little turnover among our personnel*. I think some of the young users find it difficult to interact with us, because they don't know the rules and all the things we ask about. For them it is easier to go to the Social Welfare Office, *because there they just might say that they need money*. ... At the Social Security Office you have to follow the *terms* set by the *law*. I am a bit marked by this. We have clear-cut rules, not like the uncertainty at the Social Welfare Office. I think it is easier for young persons to go to the Social Welfare Office than this office, because here you have to relate to *demands*. At the Social Welfare Office things are more uncertain, and you may ask for things. ... It is very seldom that young users come here alone. They are accompanied by professional expertise, such as the doctor, the Social Welfare Office or a psychiatric nurse. If you are *strong* then you are in no need of the professional expertise. ... *The local condition is of importance. You know*

their parents and you understand what the content of the problem is. Because you understand their *social background* – you understand that things are *difficult*. I think this makes it easier for them when it comes to the interaction with us; if I know the father is an alcoholic then I don't have to ask about it – I take human considerations into account (Respondent F-40).

When the Social Security Office works with marginalised and unemployed youth the basic consequence for them seems to be negative or at the least uncertain. The office, in cooperation with the Local Employment Office, tries to enforce the activation policy by directing the young clients towards work. This seems to presuppose that the individual client somehow is capable. It seems, however, that these clients are not by necessity ready to be mediated towards work (cf. Slettebø 2000), and subsequently their connection to the Social Security Office may represent a defeat for them. This implies that to be processed by this office represents a problematic consequence for these clients, relating to both interactional and institutional aspects of the bureaucratic encounter (cf. Colton et al 1997).

The Local Employment Office

Actions

At the *Local Employment Office*, the objective is finding jobs for the unemployed youth, and placements for clients are reported to be in the form of ordinary types of work. F-42 states that a significant proportion of the clients at the office are able to find placements on their own.

It is underlined by the officials that they do not delve into the social background of the clients when having job-related dialogues with them. A standard part of the work is to discuss visions of future employment with the young clients; what they are interested in and whether they are, in fact, unmotivated to find a job. Part of this effort is also to challenge the young clients with regards to job orientation. Respondent F-42 is quoted on how one works with and challenges the clients, and by challenging clients make them consider working at the fish industry.

A main task is to have a dialogue with them on what their *wishes* are; what kind of job they want, and on how to reach their goal. We talk to them about this and try to follow them up, by calling them in for a meeting every third month. Then *they* or *we* try to find a placement. Very often they are able to fix it on their own. We try to find placements according to the user's own interests. It may be in the industry or in a kindergarten for instance. If you live in a big city you may pick and choose among jobs, even without an education. A lot of young persons here want to stay in "the Fjord", so we have to start from there. *But what are you supposed to do here, if you don't want to work in the fish industry?* (Respondent F-42)

Sometimes, the office is able to direct some of their clients towards work that is suitable to those with special interests or needs concerning the duration and hours of the work, which relates to the core work in the community. These options seem, nevertheless, to be time-limited and unstable—exemplified by “Lossesentralen”. This means that the office plays an important role for the clients in the job finding process including for unemployed youth with a marginal relationship to the local labour market; but the office informally *favours* essentially those who conform to the dominant work in “the Fjord”. Respondent F-42 is quoted on this.

Some years ago we had this young man applying for a job, and it was really difficult finding one, and he was not able to keep a single job. But then he got an industrial washing job, where he could start working at eleven o'clock in the evening. It all worked out just fine! There was never any nonsense, and he did not shirk work once. The work suited him perfectly. Before that he had been with the Social Security Office and the Social Welfare Office – just back and forth, all the time. ... *Lossesentralen* – when the boats come in, it is important to unload them as fast as possible. We have a group of young men, *and they are also with the Social Welfare Office*, who works there. They earn good money the days they are working there. For some that kind of job functions well. For some people it is not “possible” to start working at seven o'clock in the morning, every day, but maybe two or three days a week. Then there are weeks where they don't work at all, and it suits them well. Last year there has been little work at the *lossesentralen* since there has been few boats coming in (Respondent F-42).

Classifications and consequences

The young and unemployed were described in terms of certain similarities and, in addition, the categorisation seemed to imply consequences for the future working with the young clients. F-42 is a veteran who has in-depth knowledge on the young clients at the office, including recognising that certain of them do have health problems, little education and low mobility—which does not easily make them fit for work (cf. Slettebø 2000; Trickey 2001; Schafft and Spjelkavik; Lorentzen 2006). F-42 is aware of the danger connected with the in-depth knowledge; to frame the future possibilities for young clients and thus maintain the perception of them as weak persons. F-42 points to the importance of having a newcomer (F-46) at the office with whom to discuss clients—concerning whether some of them should be given a second chance on the local labour market and be “put on the list”. (The interview with F-46 however, revealed that she, in a short span of time, had developed in-depth knowledge of clients, as well.)

Young and unemployed persons have little education. We have hardly anyone with higher education here that is out of work. Then it is a trait that they want to live in “the Fjord”, *they don't want to move away*. There are a lot of problems connected to the abuse of drugs, and also psychiatric problems. ... We have very few young persons on work-related rehabilitation. Some of those have a physical impediment, which they are born with, or sometimes a psychiatric problem. ... It is easy for me to categorise people,

because I know the unemployed so well. Therefore, it is good to have a colleague to discuss with, and who may see things differently. Because when an employer calls the office in need of persons who can work, I come up with names that *I see fit* for the job; is this a suitable person – and should this one get another chance? *I put together a different list of names than my colleague (F-46)*(Respondent F-42).

F-46 categorises the clients at the office in two different ways. To become affiliated with the local welfare bureaucracies because one is laid off by the fish industry is seen as allowing a common understanding of acceptance among the ones laid off. This is noted as a recurring phenomenon in “the Fjord”, and knowledge is carried across generations that this is the way it is from time to time. Lay-offs in the fish industry, as a way of causing one to become a client, is *not* seen as shameful, as the individual worker is not viewed as responsible for the situation. The second categorisation identified by F-46 is linked to the repetition of efforts by the office to qualify categories of clients for the local labour market. These clients are perceived to be “drop-outs” from school and not participating in leisure activities.

Lack of success in the effort of qualifying clients for work is perceived as a sign of a *weak will* among this category of clients; they cannot face the work of “the Fjord” and are seen as having little potential for future success. F-46 quite clearly “admits” that she categorises clients according to this, by what she terms as “putting them in the drawer” and looking upon them as having certain constant negative characteristics. This practice can be seen as the contrary of creaming as it implies that clients who are difficult to mediate to work in time are given little priority, in addition to being seen as lacking willpower and thus does not deserve much attention from the office on “moral grounds” (cf. Terum 1997; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Thoren 2008).

What, however, seems to be *overlooked* by F-46 is the possibility that the limited repertoire of jobs in this community shapes the image of some unemployed clients as unwilling to work, when in reality the local labour market is not suited to accommodate the needs, wishes and potentials for some of the clients (cf. Thoren 2008; Sunley et al 2006). The dominant fish industry represents a work regime, where certain types of work operations and working hour arrangements prevail. This represents structural frames that do not fit all clients.

I think it is OK for them to seek help at the office if one is laid off from the fish industry. *It is a way of life*. Their parents may have worked in the fish industry – so they are used to seeking help here, or at the Social Welfare Office. ... Most of the young users at this office have dropped out of school. Then they seem not to have any leisure activities. The young and unemployed are often “veterans”. They have been with us for quite some time. If you don’t get a placement for them rather quickly, then it is very difficult. Some of them have been registered in our system as long as I have been working here. And we have tried a lot of things, and the reason why they drop out of

courses and so on is always the same. They can't stand it. *They can't face getting up in the morning*. It is the same persons all the time; and then I "*pigeonhole them*". Yeah; I do that – I put them in "the drawer" (Respondent F-46)

To be processed by the Local Employment Office creates positive consequences for those clients able and willing to adapt to the local working life. For long-term unemployed clients, who are also clients with the Social Welfare Office and who lack such abilities, more negative consequences are likely to occur. This is revealed through *interaction* with the officials at the Local Employment Office, where their shortcomings are exposed, and through *referrals* from the Social Welfare Office, which also display shortcomings in relation to presenting them as "real" manpower.

F-42's statements concerning consequences related to *interaction* may be interpreted the following way. The interaction between an official and a client is dependent upon the personal relationship created through the process. This means that for a young client it may be important whether it is F-42 or F-46 who is that person's official. Then, becoming experienced means obtaining additional information on the clients. Certain of the young clients at the office are seen as lacking personal resources, in the sense that they need help in the communication process from third parties, such as their parents. F-42 recognises that sometimes third parties can take over the conversation on behalf of the client, which is assessed as unwanted from the perspective of the office.

Another aspect of F-42;s statement is the meaning of having a relationship to a particular client outside the *bureaucratic context*, something that is likely to happen in small and transparent societies like "the Fjord", and which may have some impact on the content of the client-official interaction. There are at least two possible ways to see this.

It may reduce *psychological costs* for the client. This could be the case when the client position itself is seen by the client as awkward, but where the wider local knowledge of the client held by the official, for instance generated through leisure activities, is experienced by the client as something normal and can show the things one is good at.

Psychological costs may also increase when the client believes that the wider local knowledge of him or her held by the official is tarnished because of the establishment of a client position. F-42 reveals stereotyped perceptions of the young clients; they are seen as unaffected by having contacted a public office, except those clients F-42 "shares" with the Social Welfare Office—young clients who prefer not to be affiliated with her office, but who need their services because they are also clients at the Social Welfare Office.

I think there are differences between the young users in how they interpret the interaction with us. And there are differences between F-46 and me in the way we interact with them, also. There are differences in the way we talk with them, since I know them very well. I have a tendency to talk to them about many things, like scooters, the price of gasoline, girlfriends and the whole lot. Maybe that makes a difference. Maybe that has something to do with the fact that they know me; I have children in the same age group as them. *I am involved with the local sports club, so I meet them there also.* Some of the ones that I follow up in my work know me from that context. Basically I think I ask more than needed, and that they tell a little bit too much about themselves. ... *I don't believe any of them really dread coming to this office. I don't think young persons dread coming to a public office at all.* We have some young users, whom we “share” with the Social Welfare Office, and they say that they would rather not be at our office. They come here to get confirmations and print outs, to be presented at the Social Welfare Office, which they need in order to receive services there. ... For me it is important that they come to the office alone. Sometimes they bring their parents along, and they answer the questions we ask the young person. The youth are able to speak for themselves, and ought to do that (Respondent F-42).

At the *Local Employment Office*, a significant point is to recognise a major difference between that office and the Social Welfare Office, which is relevant when focusing on consequences for clients when it comes to *referrals*. The young clients at the Social Welfare Office are seen as *lazy* and unwilling to work, even if F-46 states that she does not know individuals within this category of youth nor at the Social Welfare Office.

It is obvious that F-46 believes that young clients at the Social Welfare Office are using that office as a replacement for starting an educational career or seeking work, and she believes that among these clients it is acceptable to have such a relation to the Social Welfare Office.

The Social Welfare Office is then seen as a *weak agency* as it is perceived as serving the *lazy* youth of “the Fjord”, because of a lack of requirements and too generous economic support that does not encourage these clients to find work in the community. The Social Welfare Office in “the Fjord” is not generally seen as a different type of welfare bureaucracy within a political system where discretionary and vague decision rules are central, but is accused of supporting those who break the *local* norms connected with the core work of this community.

I have no experience with the Social Welfare Office, but I think that they are very weak – I believe their users get things too easy. I don't think the Social Welfare Office meet their young users with any demands. They should have stronger demands. It is too easy just to get a print out and send in the report cards. I think young persons rather should get themselves an education than being with the Social Welfare Office. Young persons who are users at the Social Welfare Office don't have to work because they get everything from that office. Why should they work when they get the same amount of money from them? No, it is much easier then to go to the Social Welfare Office, because there is no disgrace or anything negative attached to it, because so many young persons do it. ... I think the Social Welfare Office have a group of young users who we never get in touch with (Respondent F-46).

The officials at the Local Employment Office underline that the manpower recruited from the Social Welfare Office is not always *real* manpower (cf. Slettebø 2000; Trickey 2001) and, thus, the *referral* of persons to the Local Employment Office imply some of them as *fit* for the local labour market, when they in reality are not capable of performing local work and/or are unwanted in the local companies. A striking argument at the Local Employment Office concerning this is that some of the clients are forced to register as applicants for work by the Social Welfare Office, and that “laziness” is a major reason behind them being unfit for work.

The Social Welfare Office wants their young users to be registered at the Local Employment Office, as applicants for work. *Some of them are not to be seen as real manpower: they don't manage to show up at work, and the employers don't want them in their companies* (Respondent F-46).

The Social Welfare Office

Actions

At the *Social Welfare Office*, it is underlined that working with the young clients is a social *process*, in connection with basic *financial* and *health* problems. This requires looking at the social background of the clients in order to make the clients change directions in life, as well as performing control work on them—such as assuring that they send in report cards and check the financial situation of the client.

Finding placements for their young clients is sometimes difficult via the Local Employment Office and F-47 suggests that they need a separate job finder. This underlines the belief that the young clients at the Social Welfare Office are seen as persons who are too marginal to be offered jobs in the fish industry. It is quite clear that the work with the young clients at this office, to a certain extent is focusing upon what the client is not good at. The statements below underline the *power-relationship*, in the shape of force and pressures, between the office and its clients.

At first I *concentrate* on the *financial* part, because that is why they are here. And when the young persons come here, and maybe they haven't had a job for some time, then I know that a debt collection is coming up. That is a rule; unpaid bills. So I encourage them to come forward with this, so we may go through it and try to work out a solution. They have *no income*. So there is not much to do besides *confirming* that *fact*. Then I encourage them to go to the Local Employment Office, and look for work there. *If they are not registered there, then they get forced to go there*. It is the Local Employment Office that finds placements for them. Sometimes I think it would be a good thing if the municipal organisation could do something to get hold of placements. One of the leaders of our municipal organisation took one of “ours” in, and this leader has been a teacher and he probably knew him from way back – *so he knows what it is like*. ... If someone is depressed and struggling with their mental state, we try to persuade them to

seek help through medical expertise. It is of relevance sometimes to refer them to a psychiatric institution, but *the young users are very reluctant to take that step.* (Respondent F-47).

Classifications and consequences

Ideas on traits concerning the young clients imply an in-depth knowledge of the situation of the clients, categorisation and the implications of what may be done towards them. In this matter, a *veteran-newcomer* divide is activated, represented by F-38 and F-47, respectively.

One similarity between F-38 and F-47 is the portrayal of their young clients (the young men) as having complex problems (cf. Slettebø 2000; Schafft and Spjelkavik 2006; Lorentzen 2006) connected to their health condition, problems in family and school, lack of training to perform certain types of work, as well as having gained a bad reputation as manpower in the community.

F-38, the veteran, reveals the dilemma with having in-depth knowledge of the client. This includes knowledge of the past and present problem situation, and there is a tendency to categorise individuals as lacking the potential for future change and achievements, thus cementing an image of them as permanently unfit for the working life. Respondent F-38 performs a categorisation of the young and unemployed clients, where the lack of “working genes” is a striking principle. Persons belonging to certain families in “the Fjord” are defined as marginal to the standard working life of this community. The client position is also believed by F-38 to be for some clients a hereditary phenomenon within some families (cf. Jonsson 1969).

I have to think of the young men. They have grown up without their father. Their problems should have been dealt with at a much *earlier stage*, before they began to develop. They show up because their families can't cope financially; their mothers can't afford to provide for them any longer. Some have reading- and writing disabilities, some have psychiatric problems and abuse drugs as well. Some have been dishonest at work, so they don't get any job in “the Fjord”. ... *They come from families which lack working genes, to put it that way. I say it is all in the genes; the family.* I have seen some families coming from small places. They have been living off the land, and never learned to go by the clock. I say they lack working genes. Sometimes their *parents* have been clients at the office, and sometimes on disablement benefit. Then they from time to time work in the informal economy. *They are not able to adjust to the fish industry* (Respondent F-38).

F-47, the newcomer, is aware of the dilemma of using depth knowledge with clients in combination with discretionary decision rules, suggests negative consequences for the client if he/she is dependent on the judgments of a veteran, and points to organisational solutions to the dilemma: it is important to be able to direct a specific client to another official at the office

who is able to look at the situation of the client with less prejudice regarding to his future potential. In reality, F-47 is aware of the possibility of “biased” creaming practices among the veterans—either they are based upon moral arguments or judgments of the (future) possibilities of clients (cf. Marston and McDonald; Thoren 2008; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003).

F-47 underlines, however, the process, which over time blurs the line between the *veteran position* and the *newcomer position*: After just a couple of years, she acknowledges she has gained in-depth knowledge of the young clients affiliated with the Social Welfare Office. She also addresses the problem of the use of *files*, which are central to a bureaucratic organisation (cf. Weber 1971). Files contain information on the *past* and sometimes primarily on failures of clients. F-47 states that she has been “encouraged” by colleagues to base her judgment of the young clients on how they are described in the files. This is then a practice that resembles what Lipsky termed *rubber stamping*—to base one’s judgments on previous and biased client information (Lipsky 1980).

F-47 represents a critical perspective on “veteran culture” at the Social Welfare Office in “the Fjord”.

*It is a culture around here: Colleagues talking about the genes of young people. “It is his genes; he is lost. There are no resources in that family, so we can’t expect anything from them”. It is a stereotype, so it can be very unfortunate. At the same time it is also positive to know a lot about the background of people – in order to give them the best kind of help. But sometimes I see that the degree of discretion may be too high. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the outcome of fairly identical cases. Some are seen as persons who deserve support because of an unfortunate adolescence, while others are seen as a “latmakk”¹³⁴, who only has anti-social genes, and a person of whom nothing may be expected – so we do not care about him”. ... It takes little to judge someone because of their family background. After two years here I know everything about nearly all of them. In the beginning it was like this – sitting down with them and listening to their stories. Then my colleagues come around and tell me it is just lies. “It is like this; you just have to read the old files – then you will know what he is like”. But I don’t want to read the old files, and sit there with the same *prejudice*. I think some of the young users may not get any further with some of the officials here, it may be better to get a *fresh start* with somebody else (Respondent F-47).*

Consequences for the clients of being processed by the Social Welfare Office relates to their interaction with this particular office, but also to the fact that these clients have a relationship with the two other offices.

At the *Social Welfare Office*, two issues specific to this office come to the fore in the *interaction*: the *office* is seen as having somewhat of a *bad reputation*, and the use of extensive discretion implies special problems that could develop into psychological costs for

¹³⁴ “Latmakk” is dialectical word meaning a lazy person. (The literal translation is: “a lazy worm”).

the client. Some young clients look upon this office as *tainted* in the community; an office for persons considered having a *weak will* and those unable to conform to the local working life. Respondent F-38 is quoted with regard to this.

I can see that for some young users it is a problem to come here and talk to us. And I don't understand what is wrong, so I ask them. And then they say: "It is not you, it is the office". It is obviously because it is the Social Welfare Office; it is not accepted being a client at our office (Respondent F-38).

F-47 suggests the *veteran-newcomer* divide applies during the interaction, as the *veteran* is inclined to steer communications towards working in the fish industry and to dwell on the past failures of the client, while the newcomer's approach is to look for new angles in the process of helping the young client.

I think there is a difference in the way some of my colleagues and I talk to the young users. I think it is easier for them to talk to me, *probably because I am not from "the Fjord"* and because I am a younger person. One of my colleagues for instance has worked here for many years. This person is seen as rather snappish, and a little bit moralizing. Young men get all the moralizing they "need" from their mothers. I try to talk to them in a different way; use other words and expressions, even try to use a sense of humour – just to make things a bit normal (Respondent F-47).

It is sometimes the case that the perceived *needs* of a client may not be in accordance with the *decision rules* of the Social Welfare Office. This represents psychological costs for the actual client; the *rules* are experienced as too vague as to facilitate immediate help, contributing to the feeling of desperation within the client as well as implying the decisions are randomly reached. One reason behind uncertainties between client needs and decision rules may be, as suggested by F-47, the fact that some clients believe they have unambiguous "rights" at the Social Welfare Office. Respondent F-47 is quoted with regard to this matter.

They believe they have not received the help they are entitled to. Or they think they have been treated without respect, and start the first sentence like this: "I really don't know why I am here, because I don't get any help from the office at all. You are just sitting her *misusing* your *power*; there is no help after all". Then it is a hopeless situation, and fortunately it is not very often this happens. Many of the young users believe they have rights at this office. ... In an ideal world it is very good to use broad discretion, to be able to give more than the minimum. It is not easy to decide why someone should get support and not others. Then you get the response that it is unfair that "I" didn't get support, because it is all based upon individual judgments. And you can't inform them of the basis of your decision. Some of the users may experience the situation as uncertain and even random: whether they get support or not (Respondent F-47).

A second type of consequence for the young and unemployed clients at the Social Welfare Office is linked to their “multi-affiliation”; they are also clients with the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office.

At the *Social Welfare Office* the officials believed the other two agencies have *superficial knowledge* of their young clients: they are *not believed to be lazy* by the officials at the Social Welfare Office. They are judged as having *complex problems*, and the Social Welfare Office is supposed to assist clients with such problems.

What really provoke me are the statements from the officials at the Social Security Office; that we pamper our users - that we do everything for them. Of course you have to expect something from the users, but what they don't understand is that we have a different set of rules to work by. We have to help people, they may choose not to. When people don't have any rights at the Social Security Office; well that's the way it is. It is a bit difficult to cooperate with them, because they shake their head at us – because they believe we do too much for our users. I would reckon that around 80% of our users have complex problems (Respondent F-47).

The Social Security Office is seen as a tough agency, which assumes a certain category of young persons as lacking the will to work. This is believed to be revealed through communication with these clients in the context of basis meetings. The Social Security Office is seen by F-47 as an office made up of *veterans* who are prejudiced towards particular clients, as well as being strongly embedded in the local work ethic as they are labelling long-term unemployed clients as *lazy*. To support the work ethic primarily means to classify long-term unemployment as a token of laziness (cf. Hill 1992, 1996; Heaven 1991; Furnham 1985; Tang and Smith-Brandon 2001).

At the Social Security Office they know everybody from way back in time. I don't think that's a good thing at all, because you may get *too prejudiced* in your judgments. Some of our mutual users complain about the way they have been treated down there; they feel *downtrodden* and that they are met with *suspicion*. They tell us they aren't even allowed to apply for things. I mean you have the right to apply, and get no for an answer. ... They don't have enough respect for the users. I have been at a couple of *basis-team-meetings* together with them. You feel that they are suspicious towards the patient, and you sense it in their tone of voice. I feel that at the Social Security Office sometimes sees young users as *lazy*. (Respondent F-47).

The Social Welfare Office trusts they provide their young clients with *demands*; they do not believe they are serving clients unconditionally. One of the demands is to be registered as available for work at the Local Employment Office, but this is not always seen as realistic as some of the young clients are not ready to fit within the working life of “the Fjord”, either because they are believed to be unable to perform ordinary work, or because they are seen as

blacklisted in the local companies as having a reputation as an untrustworthy labour force. F-47 illustrates the dilemma concerning a client's lack of individual capability to work and the "need" of the agency to enforce the activation policy. To *force* an unfit person to register at the Local Employment Office as a legitimate applicant for work as a countermove for not accepting medical treatment proposed by the office represents a bureaucratic use of power with, at the least, uncertain consequences for the client.

When the person is a drug addict with an additional mental problem, then it is limited what you should expect from that person. ... Our users shall, as a general rule, be registered at the Local Employment Office, as *applicants for work*. But they are not always real manpower. We had this young man with mental problems, who was no real manpower. *He refused to get any professional help, so he has to be registered at the Local Employment Office* (Respondent F-47).

The young and unemployed clients in "the Fjord" that have a main connection to the Social Welfare Office often experience being referred to other agencies. Such referrals have uncertain outcomes. Some clients run the risk of being labelled as lazy by officials at the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office. Referring a client initiated into the system by the Social Welfare Office to the other offices also represents uncertainties. If the referrals—a practice inherent in the activation policy—are done as "mass-referrals" (cf. Marston and McDonald 2006; Thoren 2008), ignoring the uniqueness of the individual or as "countermoves", then persons unfit for the labour market are presented as capable of working.

“The Bay”

A presentation of the respondents at the street-level bureaucracies

At the *Social Welfare Office*, respondents B-49, B-52 and B-60 were interviewed. B-49 was from “the Bay” and had worked at the office for eight years at that time. Her professional background was as an educated social worker (child care), who had a three-year college education in western Norway. She was also interested in further education in the field of social work at master level. Before she started working at the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay”, B-49 had worked at a kindergarten, with the mentally retarded and at a children’s home. At the office, B-49 worked towards preventive efforts among youth, as well as client work.

B-52 was also from “the Bay” and had at that time worked at the office for nearly 30 years, and was educated as a social worker. B-52 was the leader of the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay”, and worked with young clients as well.

B-60 was from “the Bay” and had at that time worked at the office for two years. She was educated as a social worker (child care), from a three-year college education acquired in western Norway. Before she started working at the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay”, B-60 had worked with the mentally retarded and for a PPT-office. The work emphasis of B-60 was related to client work, including youth, with a focus on personal finances, drug abuse and psychiatric problems.

At the Social Welfare Office the standard expectations of the officials towards the young clients are influenced by the activation policy, direct the clients towards education and work, but is also linked to the *empowerment* ideology (cf. Solomon 1976; Rose and Black 1985; Payne 1991; Bookman and Morgen 1988; Ekland and Heggen 2007): to develop their potential but *not* to make the specific *choices* for them. On the other hand, the reality seems to be that not much is to be expected from at least some of them who lack the capability to conform to the activation policy, when it comes to their *present state*. The officials at this agency may be seen as oriented towards the objectives connected to the public *policies* they are set out to implement and their own *professional* norms, and not being advocates for a local work ethic.

At the *Social Security Office*, respondents B-54 and B-55 were interviewed. B-54 had worked at the office for more than 20 years, and he lived in a neighbouring municipality. One of B-54’s work emphasis was rehabilitation. With regard to standard expectations towards the

clients B-54 stated that the office strives to provide their young clients with guidelines concerning the pursuit of finding work or education that suits the individual client.

B-55 was from “the Bay” and lived there at the time the responses were provided. At that time she had worked at the office for more than 25 years, and her work emphasis included single mothers. The normal expectations towards the *single mothers* held by B-55 are of a general character: finding work or getting into an educational programme—she was not an “advocate” for the shipbuilding industry in “the Bay”.

At the **Local Employment Office**, respondents B-57, B-58 and B-59 were interviewed. B-57 was from “the Bay” and had at that time worked at the office for 18 years. She was educated at the level of the comprehensive school, and had achieved internal training within the service. At the time the responses were provided she worked primarily with issues related to rehabilitation.

B-58 was not from “the Bay” but had at that time lived and worked there for seven years. She was college educated in the field of marketing. B-58 worked especially with those young clients who leave the secondary modern school¹³⁵, and who need to be directed either towards work or obtaining more education.

B-59 was from “the Bay” and had at that time worked at the office for just six months. She was educated as a social worker (child care) in 2000 by a three-year college education achieved in western Norway. B-59 worked with clients in all age-categories, including the youth. Her area of emphasis was to follow up on applications for work, as well as processing applications for daily allowances¹³⁶.

At the Local Employment Office, two main patterns may be detected in the statements concerning the young clients regarding normative expectations. First, the office has expectations towards them in terms of *work as such*, and not of specific types of work. This means that the Local Employment Office in “the Bay” is not an *advocate* for the shipyards in the sense that they necessarily direct the client towards that type of work. Second, the office expects the young clients to be *capable* in contributing to the process of finding work, to have the ability to formulate job desires, be available, make contact with an employer on their own, generally to put in an effort themselves, and not solely rely on help from the official. In short: present oneself as a *strong* and determined person.

¹³⁵ In Norwegian secondary modern school means *Ungdomsskolen* (Kirkeby 2001:1328).

¹³⁶ In Norwegian daily allowances means *dagpenger* (Kirkeby 2001:848).

Street-level implementation of the activation policy in “the Bay”

Single mothers and the Social Security Office

Actions

At the *Social Security Office* the work with *single mothers* seems to focus on rendering the statutory service, performing bureaucratic control and ensuring that the clients conform to the activation policy—for instance, by encouraging them to start an educational career without putting any pressure upon them. The bureaucratic control with regard to the single mothers is to make sure that they have documentation of the breakup with the father of the child (ren) and that they do not live together anymore. B-55 also stated that when dealing with the single mothers one does not go into the social background, just confirming the circumstances of the breakup.

The community of “the Bay” is not seen as the frame concerning mediation of work to the single mothers—if and when that is necessary. It is the region that causes the limit. Working with them means to sometime refer them to the Local Employment Office, and as long as the single mothers are able to work or study, this type of *referral* will be in line with their abilities and of valuable assistance. Lipsky states that referrals are characterised by a dualism; they may help clients as well as turn out to be futile (Lipsky 1980). The single mothers, as they are described by B-55, embody capabilities that enable referrals to function as real aid.

We give them a service, which they are entitled to. Then I follow them up. I call them in and revise their case after six, nine or twelve months – dependent on their situation. I try to motivate them to take on an educational programme, and remind them of the application time limits concerning the schools. *I might also refer them to the Local Employment Office or an employment officer.* If the single mothers are rather young then they sometimes don’t know what they want. We may recommend what to do, but not pressure them. *I think most of the single mothers are able to work or take on an educational career.* ... I don’t think local conditions are of great importance in working with them, since schools and work are found in the region. *So “the Bay” is not the limit in that sense* (Respondent B-55).

Classifications and consequences

B-55 sees some common traits among the single mothers concerning family background—that the single mothers themselves come from “broken families” –but this should be seen in the context of single mothers as a category that are working or undertaking education, which implies that other types of classifications seem of little relevance.

I don’t see many similarities among the *single mothers*. The resources they have vary between them. Maybe there is one slight tendency: an overweight of them come from broken families, not from stable families. It is easier to get into this situation if your

mother also was a single mother. They have a different background. I don't see any other common denominators (Respondent B-55).

B-55 perceived the interaction with them as unproblematic, and also believed that the single mothers themselves experienced the encounter with this office as unproblematic—there was no negative consequence attached to being associated with and processed by the office.

I don't see any problems in the interaction with them. It does not look as if it is a problem for them to come to a public office. It is easy for them to ask about things. They may call me on the phone or drop by and get an appointment at the office. I can also reach them on the phone and get the information I need (Respondent B-55).

B-55 believed that as long as single mothers “just” belong to the Social Security Office, and at the least do not have to establish a relationship with the Social Welfare Office, then a positive client experience is not “jeopardised”. B-55 also believed that her office is “normal” in the sense that most people during their life come in contact with and receives entitled services from the office.

To direct clients to the Social Welfare Office is, in fact, seen by B-55 as a *burden* both for clients and for her as an official, since this implies forcing the client to establish a relationship with an agency that is humiliating to deal with since it applies a means-test procedure when handling cases (cf. Titmuss 1968).

The Social Security Office has a clear-cut set of rules to go by. You get so and so much in financial support and the marital status decides whether you are entitled or not. The Social Welfare Office has a quite different budget; there you have the means test, which we do not have. We have nearly all citizens coming in sometime or another – our office is “from the cradle to the grave”. The Social Welfare Office is in many ways an office for people in *need*. I believe many are reluctant to go to the Social Welfare Office; it is like a *defeat* to go there and ask for help. I think it is very humiliating *for us* to direct them towards the Social Welfare Office (Respondent B-55).

Unemployed youth and the three offices

The Social Security Office

Actions

At the Social Security Office, the work with *youth on medical rehabilitation* requires that the client has to inform the office of his biographical data, problem situation and treatment plans. This is achieved through a standard document (the service declaration). The client may also have to provide information on himself at the meetings of the *basis teams*, where *professional* expertise is present.

Often we have a meeting in a *basis team*, either prior to their application or after they have applied. We discuss the content of the treatment and things we are concerned about. We discuss with the user if things are the way they have been presented – have a discussion on things (Respondent B-54).

The office, as such, does not provide the clients with a specific treatment, the goal is to enable them to learn their role as clients of welfare and health services, and possibly refer them to the Local Employment Office.

Towards the *weakest* of them we have tried making them learn how to make contact with the system – get used to the system. Encourage them to go to the Local Employment Office, something like that. If they have been with a psychologist for instance they are encouraged to go to our office and talk to an official. When it comes to counselling on education – it is mostly done at the Local Employment Office (Respondent B-54).

Classifications and consequences

Young people on medical rehabilitation at the Social Security Office may be looked upon as having some traits in common, according to the official; specifically drug abuse and the belief that the individual is part of a sub-culture. An important aspect concerning the statement of B-54 is the consequences of categorisation. Since this office primarily engages in bureaucratic control work regarding the *rules of access*, categorisation is seen as being of little importance. The consequences are believed to be of a different character with regard to those who offer *treatment* to the client—such as medical expertise, the Social Welfare Office and the Local Employment Office. Then the categorisation may represent a greater danger for generalising about the clients.

There is a great variation. But we often see that they have been together for a long time, at least when we speak of young persons abusing drugs. It is a growing group I believe, they know each other and interact. This we have discovered. ... It is easily done to make the mistake of *generalising* about them. We try all the time to avoid that. *But I*

*don't think it means a lot if you categorise them, as long as you are working at the Social Security Office. Our main task is to deal with the financial support. We reach a decision on rehabilitation money for a specific length of time. The doctor, the psychologist or the Social Welfare Office carries out the follow up. I think there is a greater danger in categorising the users in the agencies which offer *treatment* to the user, like the Social Welfare Office, or also the Local Employment Office (Respondent B-54).*

B-54 underlined that interacting with the clients is seen as a learning process, whereby one develops “techniques” to deal with them, and the interaction is seen as influenced by the types of rules the office provides to the client; strict bureaucratic *rules* are believed to produce an uncomplicated interaction, i.e., without any tension or hostility between the client and the official. This supports the belief that strict rules counteract the rise of psychological costs for the client. The local context (i.e., social transparency) is believed to have an influence on the interaction, but in uncertain ways. B-54 believes that some of the clients are confident in interacting with an official they know personally, while others think this is an uneasy encounter with the bureaucracy. Staff *turnover* at the office affects the official-client relation and is recognised as a burden for the young client, who then has to *repeat* his or her life story over and over. It is not the repetition as such which represents the problem, but the *themes* which have to be repeated, representing psychological costs for the client, as one has to talk about difficult matters.

I can only remember one time being threatened during all the years I have been working here. It is a about learning – a learning process. You have to say “hm and yes” where necessary, and act firm when needed. ... I think it is easier to interact with this office than it is with the Social Welfare Office, since we always may point to the rules. ... The local conditions may have something to say concerning the interaction. The community is a bit transparent, and for some it seems like a good thing to interact with someone they already know. Others in turn may feel it is a bit *embarrassing*. I live in an adjacent community to “the Bay”, so I don't know that many young users personally. I believe many of them think it is OK to go to someone they don't know beforehand. And they like to have a permanent official dealing with their case. *They don't like to change, because then they have to repeat their life story over and over again. Many of them react to that, especially the young ones who have the kind of problems we have been talking about* (Respondent B-54).

B-54 suggests a divide exists between the offices that have implications on the consequences clients may experience. The Social Security Office and the Social Welfare Office are seen as having a set of clients characterized by *complex problems* and being *ill* (cf. Slettebø 2000; Schafft and Spjelkavik 2006; Lorentzen 2006), whilst the Local Employment Office is

understood as having a major segment of their clients who are well and thus *ready* to be offered work. The implication of this is that sometimes clients referred from the Social Security Office to the Local Employment Office represent second-rate labour, and the clients feel the Local Employment Office expects too much of them. B-54 also believes that the Social Welfare Office is negatively labelled as this office applies a means-test system, forcing their applicants to plead for economic support. A corollary of this is that there will be a negative consequence for a client affiliated with the Social Welfare Office. The Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office represent firm rules that apply towards the clients, and in time both of these offices have become “normalized” and accepted by society, the way B-54 sees it.

The offices have their own special organisational cultures. The Local Employment Office is tougher. I think this is so because they deal more with people that are *well*. At our office the users are more or less *sick*. Sometimes the users complain on the Local Employment Office. The Social Welfare Office is more similar to us, since they also have to deal with *ill* people or people in *need* because of financial problems and so on. Then, there are important differences between the Social Welfare Office and us. At our office you will see that we have firm rules, which entitle you to a service, or not. The Social Welfare Office is more like *begging*. Because of the cut backs on their budget, it is becoming even more of a begging institution. I don't believe there is any shame attached to seeking help at the Local Employment Office or the Social Security Office – *anymore* (Respondent B-54).

The Local Employment Office

Actions

At the Local Employment Office, the work with their *young clients* means the following. The officials try to discuss with the clients what their wishes for employment are, and registers their CV. This implies that the officials might delve into the social background of the clients. In efforts to mediate unemployed youth towards work, the region is seen as the limit, not the community of “the Bay” as such. This is important as the clients as a category express a variety of job wishes, and the functional region of which “the Bay” is a part offers various types of job possibilities.

I think, especially concerning youth that what a person wants to work with differs greatly from one individual to another. *I think in terms of the entire region when it comes to work, and here are a lot of job possibilities (variety)* (Respondent B-58).

The office tries to find placements at *ordinary types of industries*, even if some of the clients are on special programmes. Placements are sometimes found by the clients themselves, but the office hopes, as a rule, to obtain placements in collaboration with the client. As an

exception, clients with special problems are from time to time placed in special work arrangements.

We try to find a placement in cooperation with the young user, and sometimes they fix that on their own. The placements may be at the shipyards, kindergartens, shops and schools for instance. *This means that the placements are within the ordinary industries.* It is quite rare that someone is directed to extraordinary kinds of work – then that person is really struggling (Respondent B-58).

Working with the young clients might target them to fit *bureaucratic pigeonholes*, such as when defining someone as characterised by *social inhibition*, to secure access to services rendered by the office. This is, for instance, done with young clients that are in need of a diagnosis related to decisions resulting from basis teams.

We have different options when it comes to finding work for the young users, like for instance an ordinary placement or assisted work¹³⁷. Some of the young persons may be defined as *socially inhibited* when it comes to finding work. They don't have a medical diagnosis, but have social problems. *We define them as socially inhibited, so that they may be included in our programme, which normally is reserved for work related rehabilitation* (Respondent B-57).

Classifications and consequences

The categorisation of the young and unemployed could result in consequences for future contact with the young clients—for instance that they are *not fit* for the school system. B-58 and B-59 display that dilemma associated with categorisation.

B-58 believes this to be just a *tool* in order to help a person by clarifying ones abilities, and underlines that categorisation needs to be made in the right time sequence, in order to render effective help. B-58 does not, however, believe that applying categorisation implies to direct a client to a specific job.

I have made my mind up concerning characteristics of the young and unemployed I have gotten in touch with. I see clearly that this is youth who have struggled with the *theoretical knowledge* in school. This view is often supported by information from the PPT-office. It has to do with their *abilities*; that they have to learn through *practical* work. ... I think the categorisation of them has come too late. They should have been categorised while in school, so they could have been given the right kind of help. I am thinking of this young man, if I have categorised him. The only way I have done that is by thinking that he has to learn through practical work. *He does not fit in with the theoretical school system.* But I don't suggest he should choose a specific occupation (Respondent B-58).

¹³⁷ In Norwegian assisted work is called *Arbeid med bistand*.

B-59, on the other hand, points at the danger of *stereotyping* by thinking of a client as he or she is portrayed in *the files* of the bureaucratic organisation. The problem with the use of client files, as B-59 sees it, is that they contain information on the client's past, and does not represent current knowledge and/or what future potential a client has. To rely on information on clients as it is portrayed in files may then lead to the practice of rubber stamping (Lipsky 1980).

I sometimes get surprised on the different kinds of problems they have. But many of them have had some *problems at school*. ... It is quite easy to *pigeonhole* persons that have been in our system for a while. I remember this young man who had been unemployed for almost a year. I thought I better call him in for a meeting to find out about this. He phoned and told me he finally had found a job. He was a very positive man, who told me about the difficulties on the labour market. After a great effort he had got a job. Then it struck me how easy it is to look at the *history* of a person (i.e.: the files) and think that something is wrong. When I got in touch with this young man I got quite a different view of him. I realised it was only the job that was lacking. The whole thing made me aware of the danger of pigeonholing, when there is no reason for it (Respondent B-59).

The implication of the statements above is that if categorizations function as "tools" they may help the client become a capable person, but when categorizations work as "stereotyping", based on past knowledge, this indicates the construction of persons as unable or reluctant to adapt to the labour market.

With regard to consequences for young and unemployed clients from being processed by the Local Employment Office, two issues are mentioned. The first one relates to turnover among the personnel at the office, and the second to clients that are referred by the Social Welfare Office.

The officials stressed the following concerning the matter of interaction: *turnover* among the officials is recognised as a negative consequence for some and the repetition of life stories as a burden for the client. This is, for instance, acknowledged by B-57 who believes that some clients express this in basis team meetings where speaking of and repeating the story of one's sickness is a problem.

However, when knowledge of a client is believed to be too great (cf. Haugland 2000), and is seen as negatively affecting the interaction and the judgment of a particular client, it is recognised that the office is able to make the changes that are needed. This implies that turnover might have different consequences for the clients.

I know of persons who have said that they *dread terribly* going to the *basis meetings*. They think it is rather unpleasant that a complete stranger from our office is showing up, listening to your sickness-story, that you have to *reveal* things about yourself. I believe

that this is worst for persons with less education, and they are persons with *little potential* for taking on an educational career as well. They are a bit suspicious because they understand little about how we work, and what we need to know to be able to work with them. We experience that most young users *wish* as *few officials* as possible to deal with. They don't want to tell their life story to four officials at the Local Employment Office, two at the Social Welfare Office and two at the Social Security Office. We tell the person who is on work related rehabilitation or *socially inhibited* about getting work that this official is yours, but we can't guarantee that you won't get another one. ... When it comes to local conditions: if I get a user who is my neighbour, someone who I know from other settings and so on, and that may look like a problem for me *or for the user*, then we can get that particular user *another official* to look into his case (Respondent B-57).

Young and unemployed clients referred from the Social Welfare Office represent an uncertainty and a challenge; are they able to perform the work? When focusing on differences between the offices this becomes clear: the Local Employment Office is seen as requiring strong demands of their clients, and it is obvious that this office sees itself as an agency that offers *real* manpower to the industries. The clients from the Social Welfare Office do not always present themselves in such a way. It is in fact believed that some of the "mutual clients" are unfit for the working life, either because of their learned incapacity or the fact that they are not yet ready for working life (cf. Slettebø 2000).

B-57 holds a deterministic view, suggesting that young clients from certain families are just not fit to work, which is a hereditary phenomenon that intersects generations and is present throughout the individuals life (cf. Jonsson 1969), and that the Social Welfare Office pressures them to work with the Local Employment Office, underlining that certain clients are not real manpower, but rather are dependent on state welfare.

I have a feeling that we at the Local Employment Office meet our users with stronger *demands*, and inform them of their *duties* as much as of their *rights*, than they do at the Social Welfare Office. Users at the Social Welfare Office are registered at our office. We have an expression which is "*real applicant for work*", which means that you are *able to work* or be on a programme, and not having problems with *drugs* or not *getting up* in the morning and so on. Many of the users that come here via the Social Welfare Office tell us that the Social Welfare Office has told them to register here. That is a statement which jars in my ears; because it is the *individual* who should *want* work and not the Social Welfare Office. ... We usually say here at the office that it is not everyone who is fit for work. That is something you may see already from their birth or during the years of growing up. They do not have what it takes to work. *Not everybody fits working, and some do not want to work. You see that some families – there is an inheritance thing.* You have a generation which has not been working, and maybe they become dependent upon the Social Welfare Office. And then they have children. The children do not have to become clients at the Social Welfare Office, but they might (Respondent B-57).

B-59 acknowledges the potential for future achievements; clients might change directions in life and also underlines that referring a client may be successful if personal problems, such as drug abuse, are first resolved. Then the office has a realistic chance to assist a client in finding work, as an employer then might find it practical to hire that person. An implication of this line of thought is that “the problem” does not lie solely with the client, but also represents an organizational challenge at the local street-level bureaucracies in terms of coordination (cf. Lødemel 1998; Smith 2000). According to Lipsky (1980) referrals represent a dualism; they may help a client but also be counterproductive. B-59 points at circumstances where referrals have had the potential to create real help for the client.

I experience that the Social Welfare Office might contact me and say “can’t you find something for this person?” I have experienced that a couple of times, and I get the feeling of this *learned helplessness*. I try to explain that it is not that easy, just to order a job for somebody. Because if they have worked for instance at the shipyards – then they have earned their rights to receive their daily allowance. And if you get that then you seldom get financial aid from the Social Welfare Office. ... And the Social Welfare Office might think that if only a person gets a job then everything will work out fine. *But we realise that for instance a drug problem has to be dealt with before you can find someone work*. If a person is on drugs then I have a problem in finding that person a job. For instance to be able to work at a kindergarten; then you need a police certificate. *We cannot judge people by their past, because everyone may change directions in life* (Respondent B-59).

The Social Welfare Office

Actions

When working with the young and unemployed clients at the Social Welfare Office it is acknowledged that these clients often have complex problems (cf. Slettebø 2000; Schafft and Spjelkavik 2006; Lorentzen 2006), and that a medical diagnosis is required in order to help them. This again means that the office is working with their clients in phases where one tends to dig deeper into the social problems and, family and network relationships of the clients over time. The clients at the Social Welfare Office have to sign a form that gives the office the ability to obtain information from other welfare agencies concerning their situation. Officials also report that sometimes the young clients omit personal information, for instance related to a drug abuse, something that can be connected to the probability that they see themselves as involuntary clients (Lipsky 1980; Braithwaite 2009).

Next, the office tries to enforce the activation policy, by discussing job alternatives with the clients and actively referring them to the Local Employment Office.

We *demand* of them that they shall *try to get work*, save for situations where the drug problem is so great that they are not able to work. Then we face them with other kinds of *demands*, for instance that they are *willing to receive different forms of help* (Respondent B-52).

The Social Welfare Office desires that their clients be offered jobs in standard forms of work, but sometimes the Local Employment Office places young clients referred from the Social Welfare Office in sheltered workshops.

There are *sheltered workshops* for people with a reduced functional capability. We have this firm which is designed for people with a limited mental ability; and the work operations are designed to match their capabilities. Then one realises that the *Local Employment Office* think of this as a programme also for alcoholics and persons with mental problems (Respondent B-52).

Another aspect of working with the clients is that they sometimes are evaluated as needing to be transferred to special institutions, for instance, for persons with behavioural problems.

Classifications and consequences

At the Social Welfare Office the young clients can be categorised as belonging to juvenile sub-cultures related to drug abuse and individuals having low self-esteem. Some clients have been exposed to the role as clients of the welfare system through their family, indicating that unemployed is something learned across generations (cf. Jonsson 1969). This classification does not represent a deterministic view in relation to the individual client, but rather places weight on whether the client has received relevant help by other system participants.

There are families which have been used to seeking help at the Social Welfare Office – it continues in the next generation. We call it the original sin. We realise that it is a hereditary situation. In some families, they don't manage to get any further, *because they have never gotten the right kind of help*. Not to be able to function is also a thing you must learn (Respondent B-52).

There seems to be an organisational *belief* at this office that categorisation is more of an analytical *tool* in the understanding of a problematic situation, and not a limitation on future possibilities for the client. It is, however, worth recognising that classifying clients also relates to experienced work load at the Social Welfare Office (cf. Lipsky (1980) who stated that classifying and coping strategies are formed by experienced work load).

To make a busy day at work easier we have to categorise and organise our impression of the users. I categorise the young users in terms of "gangs", so I sort of know where they "belong". *It is just to be able to know them*. I am not thinking of their *individual potential*. (Respondent B-49).

Still, one may see the danger of categorisation—which means to ignore the potential of the clients. This danger is quite prominent in B-52’s statement, which underlines certain *professions’* tendency to focus on shortcomings and failures, which in B-52’s eyes may lead to stigmatisation of the client. Pihl (2002) argues that professional expertise sometimes runs the risk of stigmatising their clients, even if their intentions are the opposite. To be focused on a problem, when the dwelling on a problem situation increases the chances to release important resources, stigmatisation may then occur as a by-product of an analysis that is intended to help persons.

Even if the young clients at this office have problems which tend to make the official see them as a challenge, the *focus* of the street-level bureaucrat should be taken into account: when the official is able to concentrate on the visions of the clients, one may then focus on what they are interested in or good at and concentrate on areas for successful change, thus empowering the client.

I remember once: two teachers came to our office to talk about a pupil who had problems at school. He was aggressive and he stole things and so on; bad behaviour and bad grades. They brought along a sheet of paper, which stated all the problems with this pupil. During the meeting with us the teachers realised they had made a bit of a mistake: they had summed up all the negative qualities of this young boy. If you are about to help people you have to look at the good qualities and sum up from there. This episode sort of opened my eyes; because we too (i.e.: the Social Welfare Office) may have a tendency to sum up the negative qualities. There is a danger in summing up the negative sides of a person; it may lead to the stigmatisation of people – it implies to *register* and *dissect* human beings. ... Most of them wish to manage something. I often ask them when they come here: why are you doing this? Usually you don’t get any answer. Then I ask: but what are your dreams? What do you think of the future? What are you looking forward to? Then you realise that it is possible actually to help them. You may help them realise that they have achieved something already (Respondent B-52).

When it comes to consequences for the young clients that are processed by the Social Welfare Office, this is affected not only by the affiliation with the office as such, but also with the different types of referrals.

A client having contact with the Social Welfare Office presents different negative consequences. One of them is linked to a client’s “affiliation” with gangs (cf. Cohen 1955; Bloch and Niederhoffer 1958; Willis 1977; Bjørgo and Carlsson 1999; Carlsson 2005; Sandberg and Pedersen 2010). These gangs represent a potential for counter-socialisation of the clients the office is trying to change, as they encourage them to continue a life characterized by deviant conduct. The gangs may be viewed as “accessories” to the office and represent a pressure and an uncertainty for some of the young and unemployed clients.

A couple of times some of them have called and said they would rather not come to the office. It might be that they are *afraid* of meeting *other* clients outside the building, trying to collect money they owe them. Or that they are afraid of getting hooked up with the gang again (Respondent B-60).

It is seen as problematic for a client that going to the Social Welfare Office means to reveal the client status and one's own "state", something that is seen as undignified. To mix ordinary people and clients with severe health problems and a marginal relationship to work in a common waiting room, may lead to stigmatisation and increase the psychological costs for the client, because it informally involves third parties. The wider context of stigmatisation, acknowledged by the officials, is the belief that this office is seen as illegitimate, the last resort and as having low status in the community.

If the interaction between a client and a specific official becomes problematic for the client, it is stressed that the Social Welfare Office has an organizational ability to change officials in order to operate professionally towards the client.

Earlier a user was not seen by everyone entering the Social Welfare Office. Now everybody sees you, after they took our reception from us. Now it is very obvious who is going to the Social Welfare Office and who is going elsewhere. Our users have to fill in their applications in the general waiting room. I think of this as our *doghouse*. It is not always easy going to a Social Welfare Office, for a number of reasons. There is the popular notion about being a client with this office. Then you have this office as the *last resort*. What does this do to their *dignity* and to their self-esteem? There is no dignity attached to saying loud and clear that you need a form, and that the whole situation is bad. They are on *drugs*, rather in an *uncritical* state and blazon out what the problem is. ... Some of them bring out the worst in me! Then you have a hard time trying to be professional. It may be a neighbour, an acquaintance or someone else. But you may always *change officials*. (Respondent B-49).

It is also quite clear that referrals of clients from the Social Welfare Office to the Local Employment Office may represent a negative consequence for clients who are seen as second-rate labour. B-49 is implying that the Local Employment Office in fact favours clients who do not have complex problems—and this may be seen as a consequence of creaming practices (cf. Marston and McDonald 2006; Thoren 2008).

My experience is that the users at our office receive help. I don't think everyone gets help at the Local Employment Office. Our users do not have first priority at that office, but of course many of them are *not ready* for work. The Local Employment Office, like all organisations, needs to be seen as successful – that they are needed by society, and in "the Bay" they have close cooperation with the large shipyards (Respondent B-49). Clients referred from the Social Welfare Office are as mentioned above are sometimes placed in *sheltered workshops* by the Local Employment Office. B-52 was rather critical of the practice of gathering persons with special problems in such an organisational setting, because

this may lead to enhance their marginal and deviant relation to the local working life in “the Bay”.

Then there is a *double segregation* as a consequence of that – the groups are *singled out*, instead of being integrated into the ordinary working life of the community (Respondent B-52).

When the Social Welfare Office refers clients to *special institutions* this may also represent a negative consequence for the client, if it implies being labelled in the community. This can be in relation to special institutions for youth with behavioural problems, and B-49 illustrates that decisions that are supposed to have the effect of empowering a person, might have uncertain and even damaging outcomes for the individual.

Sometimes we have to refer young persons to institutions. We are aware of situations where this has been a complete failure. The experience has been so negative for the individual that that person is marked for life (Respondent B-49).

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the following question: How do the street-level bureaucrats at the local welfare bureaucracies implement the activation policy towards young single mothers and unemployed youth? This was done by looking at how single mothers and unemployed youth in “the Fjord” and “the Bay” were processed by the Social Security Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office. Implementation was defined as how clients are acted upon, how they are classified and what consequences “acting” and “classifying” represent for the young clients.

Street-level implementation in “the Fjord”

Single mothers

The single mothers in “the Fjord” are primarily associated with the *Social Security Office*. Because the single mothers are either working or undertaking an educational career the actions towards them by this office is, in reality, limited to bureaucratic matters regarding rules of accessing the services and follow-up routines inherent in the activation policy. In order to handle these cases the office primarily needs information from the single mothers related to their marital status.

The single mothers are, by and large, classified as workers or students, and a significant proportion of them are believed to come from broken families. It is, however, important to recognise that these classifications have little practical meaning related to the implementation of the activation policy, as little has to be done towards the single mother. This also implies that other types of classifications are unnecessary, such as issues related to their social background.

It is believed at the office that the consequences for single mother are of a positive nature. The interaction with the official is recognised as unproblematic for the young single mothers, because there are clearly defined access rules. Also, it is believed that a relationship with the Social Security Office allows a client to be judged as legitimate, and this experience is not jeopardised as long as the young single mothers avoid the Social Welfare Office, which is seen by B-43 as serving the notoriously lazy youth of “the Fjord”. B-43 believes that it is important for the single mothers not to be associated with the “lazy clientele” at the Social Welfare Office.

Unemployed youth

The long-term unemployed youth in “the Fjord” are generally clients of all three offices.

At the *Social Security Office*, working with young unemployed clients implied to assist those in need of improvements at the work place, but the main focus in the interview was on those clients that this office “shared” with the Social Welfare Office. For those in need of work place improvements, an individual plan was the “tool” the official reported as using with these clients. One is then focused on what can be done in that setting, and does not go into the social background of the client. When working with the young “mutual clients” that were long-term unemployed and had a marginal relationship to the working life, the use of basis teams was vital. These teams consist of officials from the Local Employment Office and medical expertise.

The “mutual clients” were classified as being tired of school and using the Social Welfare Office as a replacement for working in the fish industry. These clients were perceived as “weak” in the sense that they needed assistance from third parties.

The official at the Social Security Office believed that little turnover among the personnel at the office ensured a positive interaction experience for the clients, and that long-term personal and in-depth knowledge of the clients on her part allowed for a reduction of interactional awkwardness in the shape of psychological costs for the client. On the other hand, she assumed the young clients whom they shared with the Social Welfare Office did not understand or accept the decision rules at this office, but rather benefited from discretionary and vague rules at the Social Welfare Office—an office that allowed these clients remain idle as it does not make any demands towards the clients.

The official acknowledged that the long-term unemployed clients were not ready for the local working life, and thus referring them to the Local Employment Office was seen as a problem. At the *Local Employment Office* work-related rehabilitation, job-finding for the long-term unemployed and providing aid to workers temporarily laid off from the fish industry are the main tasks. The interviews focused mainly the long-term unemployed. With regard to this, the office tries to find placements in ordinary types of work and, in connection with the placements, has conversations with the clients regarding desired work. Part of the placement process is to challenge the young clients—and it is quite clear that this includes encouraging them to consider the fish industry. The mediation process favours those willing and able to work at this dominant industry, but it is recognised that marginal youth (that also are clients at the Social Welfare Office) may be directed to jobs that suit their specific wishes and needs, in reality within the frames of the fish industry system. When it comes to classifications, it is

believed that a segment of potential workers are able to find work on their own. Long-term unemployed youth are considered as having health problems, little education and low mobility. Some of these clients are also classified differently by the veteran and the newcomer, in being given new chances for mediation to work. It is, however, reasonable to think that this divide in time becomes blurred. Those who are laid off from the fish industry due to seasonal fluctuations are classified as accepting this and, also then, to become short time clients at the office. This is believed to be “normal” in “the Fjord” and does not result in any accusation or shame for the unemployed. Another classification regarding young and long-term unemployed youth applies to those who have been in “the system” for a while, where the officials believe that repeated efforts in finding work for the clients has become futile. These clients are said to lack willpower and receive over time little attention by the office. Implementation consequences seem to be positive for those who can adapt to the local working life. Those who are dependent on third parties in this process seem, however, to find this problematic or awkward, and this should be related to the fact that the Local Employment Office demands their clients be determined. It is obvious that some of the clients are judged as lazy and “supported” by the Social Welfare Office, and for these clients a forced referral seems to be a negative consequence, as they do not manage to work and the local companies do not want them as employees.

At the *Social Welfare Office*, the young clients are typically marginal to the working life as well as displaying additional personal problems. Working with these clients is a social process that normally starts with addressing acute financial problems, and then delving further and deeper into the social background of the client. Working with the clients implies focusing on their problems and “failures”. One then engages in control work related to the financial side as well as monitoring that the clients deliver their report cards. Another aspect of the work with the clients is to aid them in finding work by referring them to the Local Employment Office, but it is recognised that this is difficult and, therefore, it was suggested that these clients need a separate job finder.

When it comes to classifying clients, this generally means to recognise that they have complex problems, related to their health, troubles related to their family and school, marginal work experience, as well as being unwanted (“blacklisted”) by the local companies. There is also a difference in classifications that follow the veteran–newcomer divide. This difference applies to the perception of a client’s future potential. The veteran represents a deterministic view that means to give up on certain clients because their social inheritance and their “working genes”, implies that they are unable to adjust to the fish industry. The newcomer

suggests that this is a belief rooted in a “veteran culture” that should be challenged by another official that has the capacity to not overlook the client’s potential to change directions in life. Regarding consequences, it is recognised that it can be negative for the client to be affiliated with the Social Welfare Office as it is tainted in the community. Unclear decision rules and apparent random outcomes are believed to create psychological costs for the client. The “mutual clients” also run the risk of being accused of sheer laziness by the officials at the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office, when a complex problem situation is a more likely explanation for their unemployment situation. Forced referrals that are either policy driven or rooted in specific judgments at the office clearly represents an uncertainty and a negative consequence for clients as they are unable to perform steady work.

Street-level implementation in “the Bay”

Single mothers

The single mothers in “the Bay” have are primarily associated with the *Social Security Office*, and this is a similarity compared with “the Fjord”. The chief impression is that single mothers are believed to be at work or study. This implies that working with them mainly means to perform bureaucratic control work related to their statutory rights, and gathering information on their marital status in order to complete their applications. At the Social Security Office in “the Bay” one, however, has the impression that one sometimes has to counsel the single mothers regarding education and mediate some of them into work. This implies that some of them are referred to the Local Employment Office. Unlike the situation in “the Fjord”, the mediation of work is done within a functional region were a variety of jobs available. As the single mothers are believed to have insignificant social and health problems, the referral practice seems to present few problems or dilemmas for the single mothers. The main classification of the single mothers performed by the official is related to the tendency that they are “recruited” from broken families. This type of classification has little impact on the enforcement of the activation policy towards the single mothers as they, as a rule, are perceived as capable of working or studying. Being perceived as capable also means that other forms of classifications (like social background) are unnecessary and likely to be absent. It is believed that the consequences of implementation for the single mothers are of a positive nature. The interaction between the single mothers and the official is seen as unproblematic. To be associated as a client with the Social Security Office is seen as normal as this is an

office that serves a wide range of persons, and thus eliminates any negative or deviant aspect for being affiliated with it. B-55 believes it is important for the single mothers to avoid establishing a relationship to the Social Welfare Office, since their means-test system is seen as a humiliating practice for the individual client. To refer clients to this office is something B-55 thinks is awkward, but because of primary traits of the single mothers such referrals do not often take place. One should recognise the distinction towards the situation in “the Fjord”: B-55 does not accuse the young unemployed clients at the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay” of being lazy.

Unemployed youth

The long-term unemployed youth in “the Bay” are usually clients with all three offices.

At the *Social Security Office* the young clients were perceived as having problems related to drugs and their mental state, and thus in need of medical treatment. To work with these clients implied obtaining information on their biography, problems and treatment plans. This information was linked to a standard device called the service declaration. The client also has to provide information on oneself at basis meetings, in the presence of medical expertise, but the main focus for the office is control work concerning the rules of access. These clients were classified as drug addicts and belonging to juvenile subcultures. The official reflected upon the tendency to classify clients, and underlined that the “danger” with regard to generalising (i.e.: stereotyping) clients is greater in instances that require treatment of the clients, such as the Social Welfare Office and medical expertise. The official believed that the strict rules of access contribute to an uncomplicated interaction between the client and the official; reducing the psychological costs for the client. On the other hand, to know an official personally seems to be a dual phenomenon some clients feel confident while others see this as embarrassing. It was underlined by the official that clients—especially the “mutual” ones—react negatively to staff turnover at the local street-level bureaucracies. This is a negative consequence of being processed, as the repetition of life stories increases the psychological costs for the client. Then there are uncertain outcomes related to referring these clients to the Local Employment Office; the clients are viewed as ill and having complex problems, indicating that they are not ready to be mediated to work. Finally, to be a client at the Social Welfare Office is perceived (by B-54) as a negative consequence because of their use of the means-test system. Client affiliation with the Social Security Office and the Local

Employment Office does not have the same type of consequences for the clients as these offices apply clear cut rules of access and are believed to be accepted in the community.

At the *Local Employment Office*, mediation of work, follow-up routines and occasionally work-related rehabilitation were the main tasks related to the youth. To work with young clients was to register their CV to obtain information on their past, as well as to discuss their future job desires. Placements are supposed to take place in ordinary industries. Finding work for the young and unemployed means to take the entire region into account; one is not restricted by the industrial structures in “the Bay” itself. The clients are sometimes classified as “tired of school”, implying that they have problems adjusting to the theoretical level of the teaching. Young clients considered in need of rehabilitation are sometimes classified as socially inhibited. This is a categorisation that is needed to fit bureaucratic pigeonholes in order to make relevant help available. The officials reflect upon the way client classifications are applied. Sometimes, this is believed to be mere analytical and rational tools in order to understand the situation of the client and in the process of rendering effective help. Classifications are, on the other hand, also acknowledged to represent stereotypical ways of perceiving the client by focusing on past achievements. Internal turnover among the personnel at the office occurs and this is believed to have two different consequences for the clients. It represents psychological costs in the burdensome repetitions of life stories for some of the clients—especially the “mutual” ones—but turnover can also be a solution to problematic official-client relationships. Referrals of clients from the Social Welfare Office is sometimes seen as a problem and a negative consequence for the particular client, as all of them are not yet ready to be mediated to work—in fact some of them are perceived as being pressured by the Social Welfare Office instead of expressing a genuine interest for work. At the Local Employment Office two contrasting views on this matter were revealed. There is a deterministic thought that social inheritance related to certain families indicates that particular individuals are not fit for work at all. There is, however, also a process-like viewpoint that individuals have the potential to change directions in life, and therefore one, as an official, has to be cautious dwelling on the past. This line of thought also emphasises inter-organisational routines and coordination. It is important for the Local Employment Office that referred clients are not work inhibited because of, for instance, drug abuse. It was, however, reported at the Local Employment Office that at least some of the clients referred from the Social Welfare Office in fact had such individual problems.

At the *Social Welfare Office*, one works with the clients in phases, where the initial challenge is linked to a financial problem, but later in the process one delves deeper into the social background of the clients a medical diagnosis is typically required. It was recognised that the clients are often in an involuntary position, and as a result omits shameful information. The office tries to aid their young clients in the job finding process by directing them to standard types of work, but sometimes the clients are placed with other persons (in sheltered workshops) that are marginal with the labour market, singling them out as special cases. These clients are then forced to be registered at the Local Employment Office as able applicants for work. Other forms of referrals are sometimes evaluated as needed as well—such as sending young clients to institutions—a practice with uncertain and occasionally stigmatising results. The clients are classified as belonging to subcultures, where drug abuse and long-term unemployment and client positions are central elements. Classifications of clients are perceived in various ways at this office. Classification is seen as an analytical and rational tool in order to understand and help the client, but this viewpoint can be questioned as experienced work load is a context in producing such classifications. The danger inherent in professional practices was then stressed—to focus on problematic and negative sides of the client, either because this is how one is professionally trained or because this seems a rational focus in order to secure help. In fact, in order to help a client it is important to focus on and amplify the positive aspects of a human being, such as his or her wishes and abilities. When it comes to consequences for the clients from being processed by the Social Welfare Office, four points were made regarding the office itself. To communicate with the office may be a burden, as persons from “the gang” encounter the client and put different forms of pressures upon him. Another problematic consequence of being a client is the revelation of the client status and the state one is in front of other persons in the common waiting room having different business at City Hall. This represents psychological costs and stigmatisation. Some of the clients at this office are recognised as being aggressive, something that challenges the particular official-client relationship. It is acknowledged at the office that it in such cases one has the ability to hand a client over to another official. The Social Welfare Office is seen by the officials as having a low status and “the last resort”, and it is a negative consequence for a client to be associated with this office. Their clients are generally perceived as having complex problems and, thus, do not represent the “best” work force, and the result of this is that these clients are not prioritised at the Local Employment Office.

Similarities between the street-level bureaucracies in the two communities

In a general meaning there are some similarities between the street-level bureaucracies in “the Fjord” and “the Bay” which are related to their functions in the total system of the Norwegian welfare state, and regarding traits of the clientele. In both communities, the Social Welfare Offices are conducting particularistic services based upon a high degree of discretionary decisions in relation to the law. In both communities, the officials at the Social Welfare Offices perform “deep diagnosis” in the sense that they tend to delve profoundly into their clients’ problems. Also in both communities the officials seem to believe that their clients and their offices are stigmatised in their respective communities.

In both communities the two other bureaucracies are carrying out universal services based upon statutory and clearly defined rights, and seem to apply standard policies such as service declarations and individual plans when working with clients. With regard to young and unemployed clients, the organisational form of “basis teams” also seems to be used in both communities. In both communities, the practice of referring individuals between the agencies in order to integrate young and unemployed clients with the local labour market also seems to be typical.

When it comes to traits of the clientele, it is a similarity between the two communities that the single mothers are seen as having few social problems, that they are linked to work and/or educational programmes and that they are affiliated with the Social Security Office. Another similarity in both communities might be identified among the young and unemployed clients: that they have additional problems in addition to being unemployed, and that they generally are affiliated with all three street-level bureaucracies.

Street-level bureaucracy distinctions: “the Fjord” versus “the Bay”

In this final section, I shall point out some significant differences between the street-level bureaucracies in the two communities with regard to structural and institutional aspects, and the related main forms of implementation discourses. The content of the discourses will be addressed more thoroughly in the final chapter.

The *embedded* Street-level bureaucracies of “the Fjord”

In “the Fjord” I consider the street-level bureaucracies to be embedded. By this I mean that they are, in various ways, embedded in the local context of this community. First, in implementing the activation policy in connection to the mediation of work regarding the young clients, the bureaucracies in “the Fjord” are heavily dependent upon the fish industry

since few other occupational options are available. Second, the street-level bureaucracies studied here are small and to a large extent professional-less, and their institutional basis seems to be based upon something other than “bureaucratic culture”, professional and formal knowledge. They are, in fact, based upon the knowledge, values and norms that are typical in the community, which means that the institutional basis is related to the fish industry. This may also be related to the fact that there have been personnel transitions from the fish industry to the street-level bureaucracies, and the Social Security Office as well as the Social Welfare Office are examples of this. The street-level bureaucracies seem to be characterised as being influenced by and enforcing the local secular work ethic. The exception here seems to be the Social Welfare Office, which from time to time does have an element of the social worker profession present, which may disturb the picture, but this phenomenon does not circumvent the main tendency of embeddedness. Here the conceptual meaning of embeddedness resembles the way in which this concept has been used by, for instance, Granovetter (1985): instead of viewing actors and decisions as characterised by “atomization” one rather looks at how institutions are influenced by other institutions through social networks. Borrowing a concept¹³⁸ from Evans (1995), the street-level bureaucracies in “the Fjord” are embedded in the local context (labour market, norms, cognitively) but are not autonomous since they are influenced by the surrounding social structure which the fish industry represents.

The structural and institutional aspects of embeddedness produce the following implementation discourses in relation to the two client categories. Towards the single mothers one finds the *worthiness* discourse, in that the single mothers are praised for adapting to the local fish industry, and this discourse bears a strong resemblance to the single mother’s own experience discourse¹³⁹, as well as to the major discourse found among local people in “the Fjord” on how the single mothers are judged as clients¹⁴⁰. Towards the young and unemployed clients, one finds among the street-level bureaucrats a *laziness* discourse, which is typical when respondents at the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office are classifying young unemployed clients that have a primary relationship with the Social Welfare Office, and with whom they have limited contact. The content of this laziness discourse resembles the laziness discourse found among local people in “the Fjord” regarding how they judge unemployed young clients, as well as how the single mother respondents in

¹³⁸ The actual concept I am referring to is *Embedded Autonomy* (Evans 1995).

¹³⁹ Cf. chapter six.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. chapter four.

“the Fjord” judge young and unemployed clients¹⁴¹. At the Social Welfare Office and the Local Employment Office, however, one finds the *complexity* discourse related to their “own” young and unemployed clients, basically underlining that a complex problem situation explains why these young persons are both long-term unemployed and clients at these offices. The content of this discourse resembles the complexity discourse found among local people, especially the middle-class respondents when they are judging this client category. This means recognising that these clients have various problems explaining their situation, and it is uncertain what is to be done towards them.

The *disembedded* Street-level bureaucracies of “the Bay”

In “the Bay”, I consider the street-level bureaucracies to be disembedded, meaning that they, to a far lesser extent, are tied to the local context, compared to the situation in “the Fjord”. First, even if “the Bay”, as such, is heavily dependent economically on its shipbuilding industry, this type of industry is not to be regarded as a narrow frame when it comes to the implementation of the activation policy related to mediation of work for the clients of the street-level bureaucracies. The explanation of this is “the Bay” is a part of a functional region, which represents a wide repertoire of job possibilities. Another trait of the street-level bureaucracies studied in “the Bay” is that they are larger (more officials employed at the offices than in “the Fjord”) and that they, to a greater extent, are professionalised, demonstrated at the Social Welfare Office where formally-educated social workers are found in the relevant positions. Furthermore, there are no traits of personnel transitions between the dominant shipbuilding industry and the local street-level bureaucracies, and neither any traits of a local work ethic as a normative foundation associated with the implementation of the activation policy. This means that the structural and institutional basis of the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” seem to be dominated by bureaucratic and professional traits. Borrowing again from Evans (1995), the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” are disembedded and autonomous in the sense that their institutional basis is not based upon characteristics of the local working life. On the other hand, the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” are not completely insulated from the community as the bureaucrats have relationships to their clients and the local working life. The point is that such relationships do not influence how the street-level bureaucracies function as institutions in this community.

¹⁴¹ Cf. chapter six.

This structural and institutional basis creates implementation discourses that are different from those found in “the Fjord”, both in content and level. In “the Fjord”, the discourses are within an individual level; related first and foremost to traits of the clients.

In “the Bay”, however, the major discourse is on a different level: it is related to traits of the street-level bureaucracies as professional policy-implementing organisations. Towards the *single mothers* one may identify the “*universalism/rights-oriented discourse*”. This discourse is found at the Social Security Office. The main factor is that traits of the single mothers are of little relevance. What is of relevance for the single mothers is believed to be that they affiliate with this office, which avoids a relationship with the Social Welfare Office. There is no accusation with regard to the clientele at the Social Welfare Office; the main factor is the belief that positive consequences for the single mothers is ensured by being associated with general and rights-oriented services.

Towards the *young and unemployed clients*, one finds (among respondents at all three offices) two variants of a critical reflexive discourse. The first variant focuses on negative aspects of bureaucratic and professional ways of implementing the activation policy, which I term the “*deviance contributing discourse*”. This discourse is related to organisational and professional phenomena like internal turnover, referrals, categorisations, and status differences between offices. The second variant focuses on the organisational and professional aspects that might have positive consequences for the young and unemployed clients. I call this the “*empowerment contributing discourse*”. This discourse is related to positive aspects of categorisation and internal turnover, the focus of professionals in working with clients and empowering forms of referrals.

Figure 5.1: *The Street-level bureaucracies in “the Fjord” and “the Bay –structures, premises and suggested discourses*

	The embedded Street-level bureaucracies in “The Fjord”	The disembedded Street-level bureaucracies in “The Bay”
Structures/premises	Narrow labour market Relatively small and profession less SLBs Personnel transition between the fish industry and SLBs Local work ethic penetrates SLBs	Wide labour market Relatively large an professionalized SLBs No personnel transition between dominant industry and SLBs Local work ethic does not penetrate SLBs
Main focus in discourses	Traits of the young clients	The SLBs as policy-implementing organisations
Discourses related to single mothers	The Worthiness discourse	The universalism/rights-oriented discourse
Discourses related to unemployed youth	The Laziness discourse The Complexity discourse	The Reflexive discourse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The deviance contributing discourse - The empowerment contributing discourse

The discursive landscape in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”

In the next chapter I shall address the experiences of single mothers and unemployed youth in the two communities. I conclude this chapter by assembling the main findings in chapters four and five, trying to establish what the discursive landscape in the two communities looks like, and thus to what the experiences of the young clients may be related.

In “*the Fjord*”, the single mothers are judged by local people and classified and acted upon by the street-level bureaucracy in a similar discursive formation; expressed through the worthiness discourse. In this community, the young and unemployed are generally judged by the local people as lazy, which type of discourse is similar at the street-level bureaucracies (especially at the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office)–the laziness discourse was identified among local people and at the street-level bureaucracies. A striking and underlying discursive pattern in “the Fjord” seems to be: *a dominant fish industry → a strong working class work ethic related to that industry → street-level bureaucracies penetrated by the local work ethic*. The implication of this pattern is that single mothers and unemployed youth in “the Fjord”, both in the community and in the street-level bureaucracies, are judged and processed according to how they are perceived in terms of their relationship to the fish industry.

In “*the Bay*”, the single mothers are judged by the local people according to the worthiness discourse, but at the street-level bureaucracies judgment is related to the universalism/rights-oriented discourse, which emphasises systemic properties more than traits of the single mothers. However, the single mothers are basically judged, classified and dealt with in a way that indicates a high degree of acceptance, both among local people and the street-level bureaucracies. Towards the young and unemployed, the major discourse among local people is the complexity discourse, which is related to the strong position of the middle class in this community. In a way, this discourse has a parallel to the street-level bureaucracies as reflected in their dominant reflexive discourse. The consequence is that discourses on the young and unemployed both among local people and the street-level bureaucracies, to a high degree, ignores individual traits of the client and the tendency not to blame the young and unemployed clients for their situation. Instead, multifactor explanations of the client position are typical as well as diagnosing organizational and professional traits of the street-level bureaucracies more than those of these clients. A striking and underlying discursive pattern in “the Bay” seems to be: *a wide labour market → a relatively strong position of the middle class → street-level bureaucracies with officials that themselves are middle-class*. The implication of this pattern is that the young and unemployed are surrounded by local people who, to a high degree, look upon them with a “sympathetic doubt”, and street-level bureaucracies that are open to criticism of the way they implement the activation policy and process these clients.

CHAPTER SIX: CLIENT EXPERIENCES IN “THE FJORD” AND “THE BAY”

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the following research element, initially presented in chapter one:

- **How do young single mothers and unemployed youth experience being clients at the local welfare bureaucracies?**

I start this chapter by pointing at types of support the clients may receive from the local street-level bureaucracies in the years of 2000-2001. This can be seen as “help” or “aid” to clients, but it might also represent the use of power and intervention towards the young clients, cf. chapter one. Next, I present the client experiences in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”. This is achieved by first giving a short overview of certain traits with regard to the clients interviewed in the two communities. The main focus, however, is to discuss what discourses on experiences that might be identified among the single mothers and the unemployed youth. The identification of discourses will be based upon the content of the interviews, and by examining the clients’ relationships with central norms in the communities, their social relationships with their family and friends, to which office they have a relationship, the character of the interaction between clients and officials, and the duration in the client position. The concept of experience was mentioned in chapter one, but may be repeated here: the knowledge that is gained from what one has observed, encountered or undergone in a specific position. The client concept was also addressed in chapter one, as persons receiving services from welfare bureaucracies, and Lipsky’s (1980) use of the term pointed at the social construction of people into clients, which means to treat persons in terms of bureaucratic categories. Central to the client concept, according to Lipsky, was also that they primarily were in a nonvoluntary position.

The support the young clients may receive from the local street-level bureaucracies

Single parents have the right to receive a three-year transitional, financial support from the Social Security Office. If one is in an educational programme, then there is the possibility of a two year extension. When the child has reached the age of three years, the single parent has to show an interest in working, and this is done by registering at the Local Employment Office, or being employed or in an educational programme. The Social Security Office may also provide financial support for hiring someone to look after the child (ren), providing educational support and for travel expenses if moving is necessary to get a job. The Social Security Office may also encourage single parents to participate in a dialogue to discuss motivation for getting a job. To be able to receive the services mentioned, the single parents must themselves claim their rights from the Social Security Office (Trygdeetaten 1997).

The Local Employment Office may assist single parents in terms of advice and occupational counselling . The Social Welfare Office may help single parents find relief in the form of “free weekends”, where someone else is taking care of the child (ren).

Unemployed youth who have difficulty finding a job may obtain financial support¹⁴² from the Social Security Office as long as they are evaluated as unfit to work by medical experts. The responsibility for rehabilitation is in the hands of the Local Employment Office (Aetat 2000). The Social Security Office may consider the possibility of disability pension and work related rehabilitation. The Local Employment Office may help the client by registering the types of occupational interest he or she has, and by finding work placements. This office may offer courses, which is supposed to enable the client to enter a permanent job¹⁴³. The office also has the responsibility for daily allowances related to workers that are temporarily out of work.

The Social Welfare Office may provide financial support in the form of social assistance. This may relate to basic needs as well as difficult transitional conditions. Financial support may be given in the form of money transfer, loans or in kind. If the client has a drug-related problem, the Social Welfare Office might offer assistance by directing the person to a regional drug-team, which is associated with a regional hospital. This office may also assist the client in

¹⁴² The Norwegian term is: Sykepenger.

¹⁴³ The Norwegian term is: AMO-kurs.

finding proper housing. The Social Welfare Office may also help clients with advice and counselling—trying to enable them to overcome a possible permanent difficult situation¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴⁴ Source: Social Services Act, 1991.

Client experiences in “the Fjord”

The unemployed youth

Six respondents comprise this category; the youngest one was 18 years old and the oldest 28. There are four young men and two young women in this respondent category. They have not had dramatic experiences linked to drugs or otherwise been in a marginalized position, save for F-5, who has been part of a local drug culture. They have unstable work history, but have had shorter periods of employment in different types of industries in the community. Some of them were on rehabilitation because of physical illnesses and some have had problems connected to school work, but have been engaged in organised leisure activities in the past.

In the interview material, the existence of a “marihuana-gang” in “the Fjord” is mentioned by some of the respondents, which includes long-term unemployed persons, who are also long-term clients at the Social Welfare Office. Persons from this drug culture are not included much in the material (save for F-5), because of their unwillingness to participate in the interviews, or because some of them were serving time in prisons, and were, therefore, difficult to contact.

The respondents have varied experiences and contact patterns with the local welfare bureaucracies. Some of them have had contact with at least two of them, and others with all.

Client experiences among the unemployed youth

The nonvoluntariness/stigmatisation discourse

It is mentioned in the literature related to street-level bureaucracy that two typical client experiences may be nonvoluntariness and stigmatisation (cf. chapter one). Among the unemployed youth respondents in “the Fjord”, it is possible to identify a discourse related to this, as focusing on those experiences that are believed to be “negative” and unwanted for the client.

In order to illustrate this type of discourse I shall refer to the experiences of respondents F-4 and F-5.

F-4 was a man aged 25, and an immigrant to “the Fjord”. He had moved to the community with his wife¹⁴⁵, and they were only staying there for a short period of time. He was interested in pursuing further education, and wanted to study at the university in one of the larger cities in Norway. He had been working for a short period in a local café in “the Fjord”. Since he was unemployed while staying in the community, he had established a relationship with the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office. The respondent judged the two local welfare bureaucracies in quite different ways. His experience with the *Social Welfare Office* was this.

To receive social assistance here for instance is enormously stigmatised¹⁴⁶. This is a small place and there is a lot of money among people here. There are a lot of rich people; *Nessekonger*¹⁴⁷. And there is a widely held belief among people that poverty is eradicated here. And if you are poor, then it is seen as self-inflicted. So to receive public support is much stigmatised. People *observe* if you are entering the office, walking back to the bank, cashing in your cheque. If you are a long-term client then you are given up here. Then you are not included in this society, and I think you then will experience real exclusion. I don’t know really how to comment upon it, but this way to deliver services in a place like this is no real help at all. In certain cases it will only worsen the situation. If you are observed at the Social Welfare Office knowledge will be produced on your situation that you are not able to work and no one will hire you either. The Social Welfare Office is located in the midst of this little Cowboy-village. All who are on the street, shopping and so on observe who is entering the office. So it is enormously stigmatised. I have used the Social Welfare Office a couple of times in situations of need. And I observed when I came in there (in the waiting room) the tacit nodding among the other clients that “Now you are among us”. There is a strange kind of atmosphere when you get in there; it is a very sad experience. My personal experience with the official was not negative or humiliating. I think she took me seriously, and she helped me. But I don’t think it would have been that nice to come around for the seventh or eighth time, looking a bit tired and cross. Because when you enter such an office – there is someone who has all the *power* and someone who is *powerless*, and behaves humbly. That is a bit humiliating in the year 2001 (Respondent F-4).

F-4 makes a connection to the local context in explaining the way welfare clients are looked upon. Basically, receiving social assistance is seen by “the locals” as self-inflicted and really unnecessary, since there is believed to be work for everyone in this community. Furthermore, the respondent points to the individual being seen in *association with other clients*, thus

¹⁴⁵ The wife of F-4 grew up in “the Fjord”.

¹⁴⁶ This respondent used the term stigma as part of his own vocabulary.

¹⁴⁷ The concept of *Nessekonger* is related to a historical phenomenon in coastal communities in northern-Norway. A *nessekonger* was a privileged trader or an owner of a fishing village (*fiskevær*). He was a powerful person in the community, and obviously also wealthy (cf. Hartviksen 1979).

implying that one is stigmatised as part of a deviant social type. This also means that the individual may become labelled as a recipient of services, as he runs the risk of becoming associated with a stereotyped category of clients. Next, visibility in “the Fjord” is underlined, which implies that it is virtually impossible to cover up one’s position as a client with the Social Welfare Office. The asymmetrical *power relationship* between clients and welfare bureaucracies is seen as creating humiliation. A person on social assistance in “the Fjord” will be seen as thoroughly weak.

F-4 also had experiences with the Local Employment Office in “the Fjord”, but in a less in-depth manner.

Yes (I think it is more accepted to use the services of the Local Employment Office). That is because you are not there because you are poor. That’s an office, which is a place for courses and a variety of services. There are many services you may receive there, which do not show that you are incompetent, I think. Especially after they have become modernised, they maybe have become less stigmatising (Respondent F-4).

This statement may be seen as highlighting the belief that this office has a more varied set of clients, and that receiving services from it may in fact express willingness to work or prepare for work. Another aspect is the connection between properties of the working life in “the Fjord” as the context for defining what is normal and deviant. Understanding the work in the fish industry as the only real job opportunity, and at the same time defining it as *undesirable*, may *force* the client position upon the individual. Occasionally, one may become a client of services because one does *not fit* with the main pattern of work which “the Fjord” has to offer. His felt stigma arises because he is forced to be compared to clients with whom he does not identify.

In a bigger society there is a wider spectre of what constitutes normality, and the opposite. Here it takes very little to be regarded as a deviant. I am very glad that I did not grow up here, because I would have been a deviant in this community. *Why?* Because I would not start filleting fish just because that is the only industry you may work at here as *unskilled* labour (Respondent F-4)¹⁴⁸.

The importance of the statement quoted above is that it points out something that seems specific to “the Fjord”; namely that the industrial structure represents the possibility of a certain background for nonvoluntarity and stigmatisation—the defiance to work for the fish industry as an option to avoid the client position.

¹⁴⁸ Respondent F-4 used the concepts of normality and deviance as part of his own vocabulary.

F-5 was a young man aged 19. Also, his mother and sister lived in “the Fjord”, as well as more distant relatives. He had problems at school, and had been part of a local drug culture. He has had part-time work locally, at the *Lossesentral*, and he would like to get a job where he can work with computers. He was a client at the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office. He described his contact with the Social Welfare Office in a way that underlines the relational aspect; the stigma that formed through specific social relations.

I think it really is *embarrassing* to be there. I don't want to go to the Social Welfare Office, but if you have to - you have to. The little job I had was not enough for anything. I never had any money. I felt I was a *parasite on my friends*. So I found out that I just had to seek help there. *My mother* thinks it is embarrassing; *she does not like it*. I was not allowed. *She said: damn – you won't do it!* She would rather pay. But I told her that it was not that easy, with two children and a house. ... They look at you just like dirt. The first thing she said when I came in there was that my eyes were glazed. Marihuana is something I do not use, but she thought that I smoked it because my eyes were glazed and red. But that is because I am at my computer until six o'clock in the morning, and then I sleep a couple of hours. So, of course I have red eyes. I don't care if others use the Social Welfare Office, but I think it is too bad for me to be there (Respondent F-5).

Two main themes are present in this respondent's experience. The first one concerns the position as a client at the office. It is obvious that he most reluctantly came into contact with the office as it did not represent his own norms, or the norms and pride of his family. He is a person who *identifies* with the local work ethic, but who lacks the means to make this happen—thus he finally has to rely on help from the local Social Welfare Office.

He recognizes that he is in need of some assistance but he sees becoming a client as defining him as a deviant person in this community, and this clearly underlines that the client position is of a nonvoluntariness character.

The second theme may be seen as stigmatisation by way of stereotyping, due to the cognitive frames held by the social worker. F-5 thought he had a legitimate reason for his “red eyes”, but felt that the social worker linked this to unwanted and deviant conduct. He, therefore, runs the risk of becoming *labelled* as an individual, i.e., seen as belonging to a stereotype with which he does not identify. F-5 has some experiences with the Local Employment Office, and has been offered temporary work from time to time. He reacted negatively to aspects of the service he has received.

I don't bother to work for Nkr 150, 00 a day – or is it just 118 you get... I don't bother to work for 118 a whole day. I just won't do it. That is what people earn per hour (Respondent F-5).

F-5¹⁴⁹ reacted negatively to the wage level, but the main point is the comparison to what “people” earn. Not only is the amount of money modest, but the statement may be interpreted as a sign of being in a deviant position. Normal people earn a lot more, for instance, when they work for the fish industry. The design of the service creates a division between normality and deviance, in this case, which underlines the relational aspect of the problem.

The worthiness discourse

Among the unemployed youth there is also another discourse related to the experiences as client with the local welfare bureaucracies. This discourse may be named “the worthiness discourse”, underlining experiences that focus on the belief that one should receive support from the bureaucracies without feeling any shame as long as one defines oneself as “deserving” help because of legitimate problems or needs. In order to illustrate this kind of discourse I shall refer to the experiences of respondent F-1.

F-1 was a woman aged 18, who had lived in “the Fjord” all her life, and had been engaged in organized sports activities. She had several relatives living in the community, and has always been interested in schoolwork. She would like to obtain more education later, and stated that her parents supported her concerning this matter. F-1 was temporarily out of work, and has had some contact with the Local Employment Office.

It was clear that the relationship with the Local Employment Office was of a routine-like kind, becoming registered as unemployed and obtaining some general information on the conditions regulating monetary allowance while unemployed. She experienced the relationship with the office as positive, and thought that there are no barriers in “the Fjord” regarding becoming a client at this office. Regarding the Social Welfare Office, she made a distinction between her own norms and the norms she saw as typical in the community. The experience of F-1 concerning this matter was that the office was seen by her as a legitimate agency and the negative attitudes in the community were set aside in F-1's¹⁵⁰ experience.

¹⁴⁹ Similar experiences as with F-5 was also found in the interviews with respondents F-3 and F-6, especially with regard to nonvoluntary client position and stigmatisation in the form of shame related to the Social Welfare Office. See appendix 6.1.

¹⁵⁰ Similar experiences as with F-1 were also found in the interview with respondent F-2. See appendix 6.2.

It has always been like that, at least in the past, that one should look down on those who use the Social Welfare Office, but to me that means nothing at all. If you need help, then you need it. That is nothing to be ashamed of (Respondent F-1).

The single mothers

Six single mothers were interviewed in “the Fjord”; the youngest was 23 years old and the eldest 28. Two of them had grown up in the community, while two were foreign immigrants. One of them was from Russia and one from the Faeroes. One had moved from a small community in northern Norway, and settled down in “the Fjord” because she got a job there. Another had moved to “the Fjord” from a town in the county where “the Fjord” is located. The immigrants had been living in “the Fjord” continuously for five years or more.

The single mothers interviewed were either pursuing educational programmes or had a job. None of them has had severe problems connected to drug abuse, crime or been involved in processes of social and economic marginalisation, save for F-9. Their life stories were portrayed as fairly uncomplicated and represented a “normal” adolescence; no dramatic experiences in school or family. Some of them have participated in organised leisure activities while growing up, but had little time for this at the present. Basically, the single mothers had relationships with the Social Security Office, and less with the two other welfare bureaucracies in “the Fjord”.

Client experiences among the single mothers

The worthiness discourse

Among the single mothers in “the Fjord”, it is possible to identify an experience discourse that is linked to worthiness with regard to the client position. Typically, these single mother respondents were working for the fish industry, and they mainly had contact with the Social Security Office in “the Fjord”. The relationship to the Social Security Office was experienced by them as normal and legitimate, and not as deviant opposing local norms. Either one receives aid because one has physical problems from working in the fish industry, /or one receives statutory support as a single provider in “combination” with being employed.

In order to illustrate this type of discourse I shall refer to the experience of respondent F-10.

F-10 was a woman aged 28, who had grown up in “the Fjord” and tried the work in the *fish industry*. For shorter periods of time she had also been on sick leave while working there, and later on *rehabilitation*. Her mother and three younger siblings lived in the community. When she was younger, she was engaged in organised leisure activities. Although she had some bad experiences with the local school she must be described as school oriented at the present,

since she had moved to a city in the southern part of Northern-Norway for her college-studies. She was alone with two children. She thought that single motherhood is quite accepted in “the Fjord” since it is so common, but she recognised that there may be some gossip concerning her obtaining financial support while undertaking educational programmes.

F-10 has had contact with the Social Security Office. There were no indications of anything that may be interpreted as a negative experience, but she suggested that others may judge one of the local welfare bureaucracies in “the Fjord” in a negative way. In essence, F-10 believed that the local welfare bureaucracies are legitimate agencies an individual in need may use to improve their situation. F-10¹⁵¹ supported the local work ethic, and her problems, which make her a client at the local welfare bureaucracies, are seen as legitimate and not something which opposes the local work ethic. On the contrary, this may be a position that underlines willingness to work for the local fish industry.

They have been very good. I haven’t much to complain about. I think I have received good help and good information. Some here may look down on those who use the local welfare bureaucracies, but I don’t care about it. Of course, I accept all the help I may get. The Social Welfare Office is more like hush! - hush! The Social Security Office is more accepted, because *everybody* is using it. *Many are also off sick* (Respondent F-10).

Being a part of this discourse implies to devalue those clients that are seen as opposing the work ethic in “the Fjord”; which basically means showing unwillingness to work for the fish industry. A statement from respondent F-8¹⁵² clearly demonstrates when a client position is not seen as worthy—and this relates to a judgment of young and unemployed clients.

As long as there is work here, and there is a lot of work in the fish industry – then *I think they should accept that kind of work*. There is not much else work around here, but you have to accept whatever work that is available. ... I think it is too easy (to get social assistance), when you think that you yourself have to work hard every day, and they get everything made ready for them. I can understand those who cannot work in the fish industry, but when it only is that you are work-shy, then... (Respondent F-8).

¹⁵¹ Similar experiences as with respondent F-10 could be found among respondents F-7, F-8 and F-12. See appendix 6.3.

¹⁵² Similar judgments by single mother respondents on the young and unemployed clients were found among respondents F-7, F-11, F-12. See appendix 6.4.

The interactional stigmatisation discourse

Among some of the single mothers in “the Fjord” it is, however, also possible to identify a different discourse on experiences. This is not a discourse that relates to the working life of the community, it is clearly limited to interactional aspects of the encounter between certain officials and certain of the single mothers. This type of experience is not related to a specific office, but to the street-level bureaucrat with whom the single mother has to communicate. This means that stigmatisation may arise from the client experience even at the Social Security Office, which is the agency with which the single mothers typically have contact. Stigmatisation means here that some of the single mothers experience the bureaucratic encounter as humiliating as it underlines dependency upon public support and one sees oneself in the position of pleading for it. In addition, the official is not experienced as a servant, but rather as a master that “owns” the means of administration.

In order to illustrate this type of discourse I refer to the experience of respondent F-9.

F-9 was a woman aged 27. She grew up in “the Fjord” and had settled down there, after residing for a couple of years in Oslo. She was single and had one child, and was at the present attending school. Her parents were living in the community, and she had a younger sister living in central Norway. She participated in organised sports activities during adolescence. F-9 did not like the local school much, but received good grades. She has had part time work in shops, the fish industry and at the local hotel in “the Fjord”. When she was in Oslo, she became part of a gang which engaged in crime and the abuse of drugs. She considered herself as a former drug addict. When her child was born she had to reconsider her social situation, and managed after some hardship to quit the drug-abuse and moved back home. She stated that she, at the time, had a small circle of acquaintances with whom she interacted. F-9¹⁵³ stated that single motherhood is rather common in “the Fjord”, and she has not experienced negative attitudes towards her being a single mother. She had her child at the age of 23, and her family thought it was alright.

She has had contact with the Social Security Office and the Social Welfare Office. Her experiences might be linked to a felt stigma. Her relationship to the Social Security Office was not a good one. This has to do with the perceived content of the *interaction* between her

¹⁵³ Similar experiences could be found among respondent F-11. See appendix 6.5.

and the official, evoking the feeling of the experience as *humiliating*, since the content of the interaction apparently was experienced by her as making her feel like she was begging for support.

They can help the child and me. They can help me get an education, but it is a bit awkward for me to go to the Social Security Office and ask for things. I don't really manage to ask for such things. *Why do you think it is awkward?* Because *it feels like it is their own money*. So it is like I am standing there *begging*, and I don't like that (Respondent F-9).

Client experiences in “the Bay”

The unemployed youth

In “the Bay” 11 unemployed youth were interviewed. Four of them are females, with age ranges from 19 to 33. The males were raised in the community, and three of the females were immigrants. The respondents cover a wide range of experiences with the local welfare bureaucracies as well as socio-economic background. Some of the respondents may be characterised as having minor problems, linked to physical problems and periods of rehabilitation. They were tired of the compulsory school, dropped out of organised leisure activities early and have had unstable work history. They were at the time motivated to becoming employed.

Other respondents may be seen as in processes of marginalisation (cf. Heggen, Jørgensen and Paulgaard, 1999, 2003), having had problems over a period of time, which also means that they have been clients at the local welfare bureaucracies for a fairly long time. They have had an unsatisfactory childhood and adolescence, because of absent parents, broken homes and violent families, and the abuse of drugs at an early stage in life. Common for them is that they did not enjoy the compulsory school, and some of them were bullied at school as well. A portion of them attempted to get integrated with the local industries, by way of programmes designed by the local welfare bureaucracies, while others seemed to have been permanently out of work.

Some of these respondents (females) were in a situation characterised by social isolation. In the past, they were part of a local party and drug culture, but had recently dissociated themselves from this culture, but they were not part of any new social networks in the community.

Some in this respondent category have had relationships with all three local welfare bureaucracies, but, for some, this relationship has been rudimentary and for others in-depth, regarding involvement and endurance in the client–bureaucracy relationship.

Client experiences among the unemployed youth

In the interviews with the unemployed youth in “the Bay”, it is possible to identify three discourses with regard to their experiences as clients.

The stigmatisation discourse

Among the unemployed youth in “the Bay”, a discourse on stigmatisation was identified. This relates to themes such as it was humiliating to present one’s life situation in the client-bureaucracy relation, and the belief that one is negatively labelled in the community and that the bureaucracy also labels the client. In order to illustrate this discourse the experiences of respondents B-10, B-3 and B-8 are presented.

B-10 was a man of 33. He grew up in the community, and had only lived away for short periods. While growing up he played soccer for the local elite sports club, but explained he was “excluded” because he came from a broken and alcoholic family; there was a lot of drinking when his father routinely returned from working at sea. He did not like the compulsory school much, and received special attention there. He started using drugs at the age of 12, and stated that he had been living alone since that time, only occasionally looked after by his grandmother. According to him, the local child welfare services did not understand his living situation. His father is dead, and he had no contact with his two siblings. He had minimal work experience, and had been receiving *rehabilitation* and *social assistance* continuously for the last *ten years*. At present he had a girlfriend who held a steady job in “the Bay”. He also is the father of a 12-year-old girl, who was also living in the community. He had drifted away from the local drug culture, and has had relationships with all of the three local welfare bureaucracies. B-10 was a man with a great ability to reflect upon his *prior life*, his present situation and his experiences with the local welfare bureaucracies.

Although B-10 stated that he had friendly meetings with social workers, much of his experiences are about *humiliation*. Some of this stemmed from the content of the client–official *interaction*, which underlines the relational production of stigma.

I think it is awkward to use the Social Welfare Office *today*. That is what I think. I think it is a strain, to put it bluntly. I was there at a meeting yesterday. I applied for additional financial support for 14 days. No, I could not get that. We sat there all of us; me, the head of office and the social worker. It was a refusal; it was not possible. I tried to explain the situation the best I could. And then I got it! So, I don’t understand what they are doing. So they really put you down before you can get what you are applying for. It is kind of weird. At the Social Welfare Office it is like you have to crawl. It is not

enough that you show up there, you have to go even lower. I have to argue from all angles; no it is awkward - it is awkward (Respondent B-10).

Another aspect is that the position as client opposes his norms, maybe not when he was younger, but *now* as a grown man. When asked why it is embarrassing to be with the Social Welfare Office he thought it had to do both with his norms and the way he might be judged by others. He had drifted away from his former life in the *subcultures*, and wanted to become normal.

You know, it is a combination. I have come so far in life that I have to do normal things. What the hell; I have to behave... Have to do normal things (Respondent B-10).

The need to be seen as normal is not only because of his own personal norms, but also stems from the need to protect his daughter, who had was of age that she might learn about B-10's reputation in "the Bay". This also clearly illustrates the relational aspect of the felt stigma concerning the case of B-10.

She does not know of these things (i.e.: his former life as a drug addict), but I think *she* understands that there is something about *me*. She understands that I am not working and things like that. So I try to make sure that she will not get an impression of anything (Respondent B-10).

He also stated that he had developed routines to cover his position as a client with the Social Welfare Office. This means that he sees the need to control certain aspects in an effort to hide his connection to the Social Welfare Office, something that clearly underlines the relational aspect of the felt stigma.

I try to get appointments with the Social Welfare Office very early in the morning. So that I am able to sneak inside, when there are few people on the streets. So I like to have the appointment set for 9 o'clock in the morning, but not at 8 o'clock because then there are a lot of people on their way to work. Sometimes I show up at the technical department (teknisk etat) and ask a silly question, before I slip in to the Social Welfare Office (Respondent B-10).

One setting where information control was prevented was while sitting in the waiting room at the Social Welfare Office, which was seen as a burdensome experience.

You have to sit down there and wait until the officials have finished the paperwork. Then you look through the glass door, and ask yourself "is *anyone else* coming through now?" Then you are just sitting there. It is very awkward. It is a *strain*. Awkward (Respondent B-10).

B-3 was a young man aged 22, who had lived in “the Bay” all his life. He came from a broken family, and he never had any contact with his father (genitor). He has been living with his mother and stepfather, and he had a half-brother. He did not like the compulsory school much, and dropped out after the seventh grade, when he was expelled from school. When he was quite young he played soccer for the local elite sports club, but dropped out later. B-3 started abusing drugs at an early age, and had been part of a local drug culture for some years. He described himself as rather outspoken, a bit bad tempered and a “rebel”. He had been in conflict with the police on several occasions, and served time in prisons at different times. He had minimal work experience and thought it was difficult for him to find work locally, but was motivated to work on a ship at the present time. He has been institutionalised for his drug abuse and conduct at different of times. He has had no relationship with the Social Security Office, but does with the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office. He stated that he had lived on social assistance for a long time. He thought there should be a good reason for receiving that kind of support. In a way, B-3 perceived his situation as a legitimate reason for obtaining help at the Social Welfare Office. He understood his problematic adolescence in such a way that he defined himself as within a group of deserving clients of services. B-3 may be seen as a client who has traded a spoiled adolescence for monetary support from the local welfare bureaucracies, and also indirectly defines the undeserving client: the one who is seen as just lacking the will to work.

If you have had a good adolescence, and never had any contact with them (the Social Welfare Office), and then suddenly show up at the office when you are in your early 20s: then it is because you lack the initiative to work (Respondent B-3).

B-3 believed that he had a bad reputation in the community because of his conduct while growing up; a lot of drug abuse, fighting and vandalism. His negative experiences with the local welfare bureaucracies should be interpreted in this context, because he believed that they have *contributed* to the stigmatising process. This means that parts of B-3’s experiences may be linked to stigmatization.

One of his negative experiences was connected to the Local Employment Office, and their alleged role in his not getting a steady job in “the Bay”. The reasons for the decision made by the office make B-3, in his mind, a labelled individual because he felt linked to a stereotype—those who do not “want” to work.

I got myself a job at a butcher’s shop. And the manager wondered if they would support, paying 50% of my wage. They told the manager that we have given up on B-3;

he does not want to have a job. That was the answer he got from them. But I wanted to have that job (Respondent B-3).

B-3's¹⁵⁴ experience with the Social Welfare Office is marked by a sharp dualism. The routine contact with them was experienced as unproblematic since he felt he deserved to receive help from the office.

I don't see it as degrading to use the Social Welfare Office, because I don't give a damn about what people think and say. There are probably a lot of people who are reluctant to use the office, but for me it is no problem to ask for money (Respondent B-3).

His bad experience with the Social Welfare Office however was connected to a particular decision made by them, which represented a recurring theme throughout the interview; once the Social Welfare Office contributed to a *decision* to send him to an institution for youth with behavioural problems. He was opposed to this, because being sent there was experienced as providing no real help and because it contributed to the stigmatisation process, which also meant problems getting work and housing in "the Bay". He believed that the cognitive frames and actions by the welfare bureaucracies lead to a process of stigmatisation, *creating* an image of him as a deviant and a weak person.

I have really positive experiences with the Social Welfare Office, except when they *sent me away*. I was sent away when I was 15 years old. Then I think you just may say thanks and farewell. Then you are *labelled*, and I think it takes a hell of a lot to come back in "the Bay". I have a bad reputation in the community; my name is a word of abuse. There is no hope of getting a job. I have experienced calling around trying to rent a flat, and people have said "I don't want you as a tenant". Being sent there (i.e.: to the institution) is some kind of "further development". It is clear to me; if you place together a bunch of morons on the basis of *force*, and are not motivated yourself: Then it is obvious that you learn from the others (the inmates) (Respondent B-3).

B-8 was a young woman of 22. She moved from southern parts of the Norwegian west coast and settled in "the Bay" together with her sister and parents some ten years ago. She experienced bullying while attending school in "the Bay", and she consequently shirked school a lot. According to her, the shirking was a substantial reason behind her being taken care of by the Child Care Service, who placed her in foster homes, institutions and a psychiatric clinic. While she was younger she partied a lot, but stated that she was now

¹⁵⁴ Similar experiences as with B-3, with regard to being labelled because of institutionalisation and for having heavy problems in relation to drug abuse and mental conditions, were also found in the interview with respondent B-5. See appendix 6.6

straight, and had few friends locally. She did not have much education, but was motivated to receive a practical education.

B-8 thought she had been well helped by the Social Welfare Office concerning economic counselling, and was met by kind officials, even if the content of the interaction sometimes represented a burdensome experience. The problem was mainly connected to the position as a client, and how B-8 perceived people *locally judged* this. This means that the felt stigma in this case is relationally shaped, through the construction of “people” on “the outside” who make one feel ashamed.

It feels a bit like *begging*, you know. It feels in a way like a defeat not to be able to cope financially. I don't feel inferior because of the officials, but people on the outside; the *impression*. What do people on the outside say? I feel as if I am *disliked*; “you are going to the office to receive money”. I feel like a parasite on the taxpayers. I feel ashamed, and looked down on. I always get the appointments early in the morning. We call it the “whore-office”. We are going down there getting ourselves some cash. We have to live too, so we go down there and organize some help. It is a bit like self-irony. I feel I have to expose myself. They need all my bills; they need to gain insight into everything. I feel I have to expose my whole economic situation, just to receive some money, milk and bread. I have to argue all the time, to prove I deserve the money. So next time I have decided to *show up in ragged clothes*, and say “hey I need the money”. Then it is easier to get it (Respondent B-8).

The experience of her relationship with the Social Welfare Office must be placed within a stigma framework, including the felt stigma. She believed she was looked down upon by the “society” of “the Bay” for not contributing to it, and only receiving monetary support from the public. Then she saw herself as someone who had to conceal when going to the Social Welfare Office, apparently to hide her relationship with this office. The information she had to give to the office was seen as producing a feeling of shame, since she then had to admit her lack of financial resources. She would rather earn her income without the help of the Social Welfare Office. The reference to the “whore office” could be interpreted as a form of degrading “reciprocity”; she received financial support by telling tales about her perceived misery concerning her present and past situation. The reference to the “ragged clothes” implies the “need” to perform identity manipulation in order to improve the possible chances to obtain financial support from the office. This could in itself be interpreted as a degrading

situation, since she then believes it pays to conform to stereotyped images of clients. B-8¹⁵⁵ is then afraid of being stereotyped as an individual.

The acceptance discourse

Among the young and unemployed an acceptance discourse may also be identified: one experiences the client position as acceptable because one is part of a subculture, isolated from a majority culture in the community or that one does not incorporate the believed norms of the community into one's own experiences of the client position. In order to illustrate this discourse I refer to the experiences of respondents B-6, B-11 and B-7.

B-6 was a man aged 28, born and raised in “the Bay”, and his parents were living there. He had five siblings, and neither they nor he had participated in any organized leisure activities during adolescence. He did not like the compulsory school much, and stated that he was bullied there and that he had few friends while growing up. B-6 stated that he began drinking alcohol at the age of 14, and that he was part of a partying culture at the time. He believed that his parents generally ignored his problems during adolescence. When he grew older, he became socially isolated, save for contact with his siblings. He lived on his own, had minimal work experience, and stated that he more or less had accepted his position as a welfare client and that he will have great problems ever finding a job. His father was a pensioner, and B-6 has been on disablement benefits for years. One of his brothers was also on disablement benefit and a former client at the Social Welfare Office. This is important, because in B-6's family it was “normal” to have a client relationship with the Social Welfare Office. In fact, it was his brother who persuaded him to establish a relationship with the office, which he had been a client at for ten years at the time. One may argue that B-6, in fact, was part of a subculture, made up of his close relatives, who protected him against negative judgments held by others in the community. This indicates that the acceptance of the client position in this case is relationally shaped.

I made contact with them. Well, *it was my brother who told me I could do it*. He had experience with them beforehand. He is disabled now, but he was at the Social Welfare Office many years before that happened. *I don't think I would have gone there if it had not been for my brother*, and his experience and that he talked to me about it. I believe my parents would think it was nice if I got a job, but so many in my family have been with the Social Welfare Office, that it is not seen as a negative thing (Respondent B-6).

¹⁵⁵ Similar experiences as with B-8, concerning how one is believed to be judged by local people when having a relationship with the Social Welfare Office, was also found in the interview with respondent B-4. See appendix 6.7.

B-6 thought it was unproblematic to interact with the officials at the Social Welfare Office, and that he was in a social situation where he needed their services. He was aware that the client position with them may be looked down upon in “the Bay”, but because of his family relationships, and being socially isolated, he is seen as experiencing the client position as acceptable. The fact that he was socially isolated implies that he stayed away from public places where negative judgments on his client position may be communicated.

B-11 was a man aged 29, who grew up in “the Bay”, and both of his parents were living there. His mother was working, and his father was on rehabilitation. He had two siblings; a brother who was working, and a sister who was home with an infant. He avoided school a lot, and has abused drugs for years. Eventually, he received an ADHD¹⁵⁶ diagnosis, and was at the present time on medicine to cope with this situation, but he was no longer abusing drugs. While on drugs, he committed crimes for profit, and has served time for this. He described himself as quite *socially isolated* after he quit the drug abuse. The impression of him is in a position as a loner in the community.

I have not done much recently. I was in my room, with the door locked, watching TV all day long. But now I am working on a car, fixing it. I am working on it in my mother’s garage. I do not go to the motor club. I don’t think I could handle that, because I have a problem with being socio-phobic. So I have problems relating to people (Respondent B-11).

B-11 had relationships with all three local welfare bureaucracies. His relationship with the Local Employment Office was of a rudimentary kind, becoming registered as an applicant for work. His experiences with the other two offices were positive; he felt treated well and received good help. He was aware that client position with the Social Welfare Office may be looked down upon in the community. Since his family did not talk about his client position, being extremely isolated socially, preoccupied with his health condition and as B-11 did not reflect much on *his* client position either, there is reason to assume that he accepted his relationship to the local street-level bureaucracies.

B-7 was a woman of 23, who had lived in the community for ten years. She had participated in organised sports activities during adolescence, and enjoyed going to school. After the compulsory school, she took more education. She had a sister living in the community. She

¹⁵⁶ The ADHD-acronym means Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (cf. Rief 2005).

had been working, but was temporarily on rehabilitation. B-7¹⁵⁷ has had rudimentary relationships with the three local welfare bureaucracies, and was not complaining much about her experiences. She found the Social Welfare Office a bit more burdensome to use compared to the other offices, but her experience with this office was quite different from those of B-4.

It is not very nice to go there, but if you have to you have to. It does not bother me if people see me there, because they cannot know why I am there. If it is to talk to the official, a problem I have to check upon or something else. They cannot really know that (Respondent B-7).

The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse

This discourse is linked to clients that have been in the client position for some time and that have a continuing problem in becoming integrated in the local labour market. There are different themes linked to this discourse: referrals between agencies; turnover among street-level bureaucrats in one single agency; and properties of work training programmes. In order to illustrate this type of discourse I shall refer to respondents B-10, B-8 and B-6.

B-10 had experienced low efficiency from the local welfare bureaucracies in helping him as a client in need.

Today I just have to shake my head to all the things I have experienced. I was obliged re-education from cook to cook! In other words: meaningless. No, there has been so much that was meaningless. That was the Local Employment Office. I feel that I only have been part of a system. I have been shuffled from one office to the next. When my periods on rehabilitation ran out, then it was the Social Welfare Office. Have been on social assistance for a while, then they got tired of me; “now there is a meeting with the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office to get me back on social security again”. So then it is social security for a while, then I worked a couple of months. That is the way it has been (Respondent B-10).

The main content of his experience is that the problem lies in the way he has been referred between the three agencies mentioned above; there has been no real progress in the efforts to make him ready for the working life.

B-8 had minimal work experience, and had for some years been registered at the Local Employment Office. B-8 had contacts with the Local Employment Office and the Social

¹⁵⁷ Similar experiences as identified with B-7 could also be found in the interviews with respondents B-1 and B-9. See appendix 6.8.

Welfare Office. Her experiences with the Local Employment Office are to be seen as a perceived lack of organizational efficiency due to turnover among the personnel¹⁵⁸.

What I am dissatisfied with is this: there is a lot of turnover among the officials down there. You come in there and it is like this; I have to read through your case. And that takes a while; it takes easily a couple of weeks. You have been there for maybe two appointments, discussing what you are interested in. Then you talk about that for a while, finding out what kind of education I got and so on. And then they wonder what my interests are. It is back and forth, we are asking here and there. You get a new appointment, and it is difficult. And then, you get a new official to look into your case, because the one you had is now working with someone else. So it is stand easy, because they have to ask the same questions over and over again all the time. I have had around 10 officials during four years. I think they are nice, and they want to help me. It is just that I have to repeat my story over and over again without getting anywhere. There is no disgrace in going to the Local Employment Office. If you are unemployed then you are unemployed, and that's it (Respondent B-8).

B-6¹⁵⁹ thought that the welfare bureaucracies in “the Bay” should be better coordinated, and he experienced a lack of efficiency when he, from time to time, had received job training. He was a bit disappointed with the Local Employment Office in this respect.

There have been different projects. Once I was on an island picking turf, and that sort of thing. Once I was down on the beach plucking garbage. That is not exactly work experience. That is what you command school children to do. I miss a more goal-oriented service. It is just to place someone in the statistics (Respondent B-6).

¹⁵⁸ A remark ought to be made concerning one of the probable consequences of turnover; the repetition of life stories. B-8 is not underlining this as a problem concerning her situation at this particular office, but the phenomenon should be recognised as a possible strain for some clients of services who would interpret the repetitive presentations of life stories as a burden, as certain clients then may interpret this as a recurring revelation of signs of perceived failures or weaknesses. Cf. findings also in chapter five where it was reported from the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office in “the Bay” that internal turnover, especially at the Local Employment Office, for some of the young and unemployed clients had such effects.

¹⁵⁹ A similar experience was found with respondent B-2. See appendix 6.9.

The single mothers

In “the Bay”, seven single mothers were interviewed, and their age range was from 19 to 33 years. They had transitory support from the Social Security Office. Some of them grew up in “the Bay”, while others were immigrants to the community. They all have one child—save for one of them who had two children—with the same biological father. Their experiences in adolescence as well as at the compulsory school were not dramatic. Some of them described the youth culture in “the Bay” as oriented towards “snobbism”, exemplified with the “need” to wear branded clothes to be accepted as part of the straight youth culture¹⁶⁰. B-14 may serve as an example of this path of reasoning.

The Bay is a community with a lot of money and many that are newly rich, and there is a lot of partying – and around goes the gossip. I think it is difficult for people that move here to get into certain social circles if you don’t drive the right type of car or wear branded clothes. I think there is a pressure on keeping up (Respondent B-14).

The single mothers had, by and large, work experience, and also participated in organised leisure activities while young. They were, at present, either working or pursuing educational programmes. They stated that they consumed a modest level of alcohol, and that they stayed away from drugs. None of the interviews with the single mothers in “the Bay” suggested moral censure of their marital status, linked to Christian associations.

Client experiences among the single mothers

The worthiness discourse

Among the single mothers interviewed in “the Bay”, it is reasonable to point at one basic discourse, the worthiness discourse. This is related to dominant traits with the single mothers: they were either at work or undertook educational programmes; they presented themselves as staying away from drugs; and their relationships to the local street-level bureaucracies were typically with the Social Security Office. The basic content of this discourse is that these clients look upon themselves as normal (in relation to work and education) and that they believe they deserve the various forms of help to which they are entitled from the Social Security Office. In order to illustrate this discourse I shall refer to respondents B-16, B-15 and B-13¹⁶¹.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. chapter three.

¹⁶¹ This discourse can also be identified in the interviews with respondents B-12, B-17 and B-18. See appendix 6.10.

B-16 was a woman of 19. She grew up in “the Bay”, and her parents and two siblings lived in the community. Both of her parents were employed. She did not participate in any organised leisure activities during adolescence. She was the mother of one child, and had some contact with the genitor. She had friends who were in a similar situation. She must be described as school oriented, but terminated a particular educational programme since it turned out not to fit her interests. At the present time, she was at home with her child. *B-16* underlined the importance of getting *work* and *education* affects how one is judged locally as a single mother.

Yes, if you only are staying at home, then it is no good; just living on social security. You have to put in an effort for yourself and the kid. You cannot stay on social security forever (Respondent *B-16*).

B-16 had experiences with the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office. She was satisfied with the way she had been treated and the information she had received.

B-15 was 20 years old. She moved to “the Bay” some 13 years ago. Both of her parents were employed, and she had three siblings. She liked the compulsory school and received good grades. She later received some further education and wanted to be a teacher in the future, and was a student at the time. She became pregnant at the age of 18, and received substantial support from her family and some support from the genitor at that time. *B-15* had experiences with the Social Security Office only. She was satisfied with their services, but could have received better information on her *rights*. She did not feel that being a client of their services represented a burden. Her experience is to be interpreted as characterized by worthiness. This may have to do with her being solely affiliated with the Social Security Office, her ability to think of the welfare bureaucracies in terms of providers of services defined by rights, and her belief that “others” in the community see her “*real self*”—securing the image of her as a worthy client of services.

I don’t feel that anyone looks down on me. I feel that everyone supports me, and *understands* that it is tougher for *me*. I think it would be different if one was abusing drugs, and not interested in working (Respondent *B-15*).

B-13 was 20 years old. She grew up in “the Bay”, and had three brothers. Her parents were living in the community, and both of them were employed. When she was younger she participated in organised leisure activities, and she enjoyed the compulsory school. She wanted to take more education later, was working at the moment, and stated that she had a strong network of friends, but that she did not mix with other single mothers. B-13 had only a relationship with the Social Security Office, was satisfied with their services, and thought they were competent in delivering relevant information on her rights. B-13 experienced her client position as having a right to what one is entitled to, and not embedded in a local culture that diminishes such a position.

I get what I am entitled to at the Social Security Office. I think they are clever at giving me the information I need. I think it feels all right to receive support from them (Respondent B-13).

The basic content of the worthiness discourse among the single mothers—getting public support on the condition that one demonstrates the willingness to work—became evident when they commented upon young and unemployed clients in the community. The following quote from the interview with respondent B-18 is illustrative of this¹⁶².

It is not easy having a complex problem (drug abuse etc). But *lazy youth* is the *worst thing* I know. Those who can't stand working because they know that they will get money anyway, and can do whatever they want (Respondent B-18).

¹⁶² A similar viewpoint on the young and unemployed clients was identified with respondent B-15. See appendix 6.11.

Conclusion

In the previous pages, I have systematically presented client experiences among single mothers and unemployed youth in the two communities. Four distinct discourses have been identified:

- **The nonvoluntariness/stigmatisation discourse**—identified among unemployed youth in both communities and single mothers in “the Fjord”
- **The worthiness discourse**—identified among single mothers in both communities and unemployed youth in “the Fjord”
- **The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse**—identified among unemployed youth in “the Bay”
- **The acceptance discourse**—identified among unemployed youth in “the Bay”

In this section, I shall summarize the main empirical findings related to these discourses.

The nonvoluntariness/stigmatisation discourse

This discourse was identified among unemployed youth in both communities and among single mothers in “the Fjord” and is related to procedural consequences for the clients.

Unemployed youth

In “*the Fjord*” some of the young and unemployed clients found themselves in a non-voluntarily client position. For respondent F-4, the significance was that his client position with the Social Welfare Office was perceived as forced upon him since he had no desire to work for the fish industry, and the explanation for the non-voluntarily experience was that he was unable to adjust to the narrow labour market in “the Fjord”. For F-5, his meagre income and the unwillingness to rely upon economic assistance from his family and friends forced him to make seek out Social Welfare Office. This position also drives these respondents into a felt stigma as they are associated with a clientele at this office with whom they do not identify, and F-5 experienced that his next of kin disapproved of his relationship with the Social Welfare Office. F-5 also believed he was labelled as a drug-addict due to misinterpretations by the social worker, as well as being given inferior “wages” at the Local Employment Office.

In “*the Bay*”, it seems that stigmatisation is more typical than the non-voluntarily client position. Respondent B-10 pointed at humiliation produced through interaction with officials

at the Social Welfare Office because the unclear rules of access to their services made him feel like “crawling” and forced to talk about shameful life matters . The shame that he experienced was also related to his daughter whom he tried to protect from knowing anything about his deviant life and his relationship to the Social Welfare Office. The embarrassment and stigma he felt in connection with being a client at this office was also expressed in his efforts to hide from local people that he had such a relationship, by ensuring that he was unseen in the waiting room at the Social Welfare Office and requesting counselling appointments at times he thought it unlikely he would be seen by local people. For respondent B-3, the main problem was that the Social Welfare Office, according to him, had labelled him in the community as a result of having sent him in the past to an institution for young persons with behavioural problems; he believed to be labelled because of this, which implied difficulties with the housing and labour market in “the Bay”. B-3 also thought he was labelled by the Local Employment Office as having inferior work skills and having given up on in the mediation process. Respondent B-8 had tried to cut her social ties to the local drug-culture and had a relationship to the Social Welfare Office. She was wondering what local people in the community might think of her while she was a client at this office. She felt “disliked” by local people, whom she thought had negative judgments of her because she believed they were considering her as someone who misused public finances and, so to speak, was a parasite on the tax-payers’ money. B-8 also found it degrading to accept the decision rules at the Social Welfare Office. Because of uncertainties related to the treatment of her application regarding financial support she found it acceptable to engage in identity manipulation, and thought that if she “showed up in ragged clothes” this would increase her chances of getting financial support from the office.

Single mothers

Some of the single mothers in “the Fjord” experienced that the interaction with officials at the Social Security Office evoked the feeling of interactional stigma. These single mothers were working and received their statutory financial rights at the office, but experienced the officials as “masters” of their financial resources and therefore found themselves in a position of “begging” for their entitled service, which represents a humiliating experience. The respondents referred to here (F-9 and F-11) expressed experiences that makes it reasonable to exclusively place them in the interactional stigmatisation discourse.

The worthiness discourse

This discourse was identified among single mothers in both communities and unemployed youth in “the Fjord”, and is a discourse that relates to procedural consequences for the clients.

Unemployed Youth—in “the Fjord”

This discourse is exemplified by the experiences of respondent F-1, who had a relationship to both the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office. She believed that there was no disgrace related to having a relationship with the Local Employment Office, but recognised that local people in “the Fjord” looked down upon individuals who received services from the Social Welfare Office. The notion of worthiness was connected to the fact that she put such negative judgments aside, and believed that using the Social Welfare Office was a legitimate act, because she defined herself as someone who had a real problem that this office could help her with, and that there was then no reason for her to feel ashamed of this bureaucracy relation.

Single mothers

The worthiness discourse among the single mothers in “the Fjord” is related to the combination of working for the fish industry with receiving statutory financial support from the Social Security Office.

Respondent F-10, for instance, points at the importance that the Social Security Office is an agency used by “everybody” in the community and that this office also renders assistance to those who are sick, which also means those who need rehabilitation after working many years for the fish industry. Typical within this discourse for the single mothers in “the Fjord” is that they support and enforce the local work ethic central to this community. They clearly draw a line towards the long-term unemployed youth, whom they think lack willpower and work ethic, and whom as a consequence are judged as “lazy” by these single mothers, as they are believed to refuse to accept available positions in the fish industry.

In “the Bay”, the impression of the single mothers was that they were working or studying. The worthiness discourse is related to this and therefore they believed they were accepted in the community and that they deserved their statutory financial support from the Social Security Office. Respondent B-16 underlined that receiving support from this office was acceptable since she also was working and respondent B-15 stressed that she felt accepted in the community in her client position as she believed that local people understood that her

situation was tough (related to economy and responsibility for raising a child on her own), but that things would have been different if she abused drugs or was uninterested in working. Respondent B-13 thought that receiving what she was entitled to bought her respect in the community since she also was working. This worthiness discourse has also another element that is similar to the discourse found among single mothers in “the Fjord”: the single mothers define a clear-cut divide towards the long-term unemployed young clients, who are judged as being “lazy”.

The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse

This discourse was identified among young and unemployed clients in “the Bay”, who had been in the client position for many years. This is a discourse that relates to material consequences for these clients, as it is concerned with problems related to receiving effective help from the local street-level bureaucracies.

Respondent B-10 criticised the Social Security Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office for lack of coordination in the effort of qualifying him for work, since he had experienced being “shuffled” back and forth between these offices. Respondent B-8 criticised the Local Employment Office because of repeating changes in officials, and stated that she had had 10 officials over a period of four years. She believed that this meant that she had no progress in the mediation process; she had to start from “scratch” with every new official she got. Respondent B-6 had received job training from the Local Employment Office, for picking up garbage on the beach and collecting turf on an island. He experienced this type of activity as not “real work” that qualified him for a more normal job. He felt he was given these sorts of “jobs” because the office needed to include him in the statistics of work-related activities.

This discourse may, in part, be related to the stigmatisation discourse, as both B-10 and B-8 were bearers of the stigmatisation discourse: they felt the need to become straight, find a job and end the relationship, especially with the Social Welfare Office. The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse points at circumstances where certain client-bureaucracy relationships are prolonged. The problem here is that the bureaucracies slow down the termination of relationship that B-10 and B-8 want to end. B-6 was within the acceptance discourse¹⁶³ so for him the main point was to criticise the actions of the Local Employment Office, because for him it did not mean much if he was to remain a client, as he had accepted his “fate” and was protected against stigmatisation from his family.

¹⁶³ This discourse is presented below.

The acceptance discourse – in “the Bay”

This discourse was identified among some of the unemployed youth in “the Bay”, and relates to procedural consequences of being in the client position. The basic element in this discourse was that bearers of it did not let negative judgments in the community of certain client positions impact their own experiences. Respondent B-6 was on disability benefits, as was his brother. In his family, it had become normal to be a client at the Social Welfare Office, and one of his brothers had persuaded him to become a client of this office. This means that he belonged to a family that had other norms than what might be typical in “the Bay”—and this protected him as a client regarding his “self-construction”. Respondent B-11 had an ADHD-diagnosis, was an ex-prisoner, on medical treatment and strongly isolated socially. He had really no sense of what the local people might think of him, and his family was not preoccupied with this either. His isolation protected him from negative judgments in the community. Respondent B-7 was a woman that believed she deserved help from the local street-level bureaucracies, and was at that moment on rehabilitation. She was aware of negative judgments among local people towards clients of the Social Welfare Office, to which she also had a client relationship. The main point in her reasoning was that local people could not really know for sure what the reasons were for her to be affiliated with the Social Welfare Office, and this had a protective effect for her.

Figure 6.1: Client experiences in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”

	“The Fjord”	“The Bay”
Single mothers	<p>The Worthiness discourse (major) The interactional stigmatisation discourse (minor)</p>	<p>The Worthiness discourse</p>
Unemployed youth	<p>The nonvoluntarity/stigmatisation discourse (major) The Worthiness discourse (minor)</p>	<p>The Acceptance discourse The stigmatisation discourse The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse (Incorporated in the Acceptance and stigmatisation discourse)</p>

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Introduction

In this chapter, I first repeat the problem statement and the four research elements, as well as revisit the model of analysis. Then I point out the findings in this work. This is first done by providing a theoretical and comparative perspective on the discourses identified in this work. Next, I point out what may be identified to be the main empirical findings in the study, and this is related to material and procedural consequences for the clients. Then I discuss the possibilities to generalize from this work, and conclude the chapter by pointing out this study's contribution to the theoretical field of street-level bureaucracy.

In this concluding chapter, I return to the problem statement presented in chapter one:

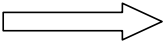
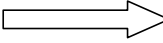
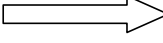
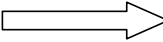
- *What are the consequences for young single mothers and unemployed youth from being clients at local welfare bureaucracies?*

I sought to answer this problem statement through the following research elements (also inherent in them is the policy dimension):

- **How do young single mothers and unemployed youth experience being clients at the local welfare bureaucracies?**
- **How do the street-level bureaucrats at the local welfare bureaucracies implement the activation policy towards young single mothers and unemployed youth?**
- **How are young single mothers and unemployed youth judged by people locally as clients with the local welfare bureaucracies?**
- **What are the local frames with regard to client experiences, judgments of the clients and the implementation of the activation policy in the two communities?**

In chapter one these four research elements were explored by referring to relevant theoretical literature, and at the end of the first chapter I also presented the following model of analysis that crystallised the main elements in the analysis:

Figure 7.1: A model of analysis

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	(Influence →)	DEPENDENT VARIABLE
<p>The activation policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Individualised bio-policy - Contractualism - Power-relations (between state and clients) 		<p>Clients consequences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Material (receiving help /not receiving help) - Procedural (Voluntarily-non-voluntarily/stigmatized-accepted)
<p>The Local context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The local labour market (repertoire of jobs) - Local norms related to work and conduct of life (structures and judgment) 		
<p>Characteristics of policy implementing street-level bureaucracy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Universalism (clear-cut rights) – particularism (means-testing, discretion) - Size (number of employees; degree of bureaucratization) - Work load and implementation forms - Degree of professionalism (Low – high) 		
<p>Client traits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At work/studying - Long-term unemployed - Social networks in the community - Norms on how to earn a living 		

Consequences for the young clients – the discourses

I start this concluding analysis by first referring to the experiences of the clients—the single mothers and the unemployed youth. Then I look at how the clients are judged by local people, and how the street-level bureaucracies implement the activation policy in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”. I also address how and when the local context has an impact on the clients, as well as pointing out the impact of the activation policy as such. Combining the four research elements that are inherent in the model of analysis is the key to answering what are the consequences of being clients. The consequence question is related to discourses identified among the actors studied in this work (cf. chapter one).

Single mothers

How the single mothers experience being clients

Among the single mothers in both communities the “worthiness discourse” is the main one, and in “the Fjord” the “interactional stigmatization discourse” also was found.

The worthiness discourse

For the single mothers the worthiness discourse is related to a comparison with what is normal in the community. If one is a client (mainly at the Social Security Office) and this is combined with being at work or undertaking an education, then the experience is marked by worthiness. One also then believes that the community approves of their client position. However, there is a distinction between the communities: in “the Fjord”, work is defined as related to the fish industry, while in “the Bay” “work” is of a more general character. Single mothers that are inside of this discourse then also disapprove of young and unemployed clients that are judged by them to be “lazy”. If we look at the relationship to the community this discourse is linked to the notion that one is “normal” with regards to norms enforced by local people related to willpower, work ethic and conduct of life. When it comes to *work ethic*, the single mothers interviewed in “the Fjord” not only support it, but their main point is that they are able to adapt to the traditional form that is dominant in this community: an industrial type that is related to a “Fordistic” production regime characterised by the use of unskilled labour, mass production via the assembly line system and control routines towards the workers (cf. Piore and Sabel 1984). With regard to the question of *willpower*, the single mothers interviewed in both communities see themselves as displaying the acceptable norm; they are not clients because they refuse to work or study, they just combine the client position with displaying

their willpower in these fields. The question of *conduct of life* is not an issue for the single mothers as they portray themselves as normal, and it is worthwhile to note that they do not experience being negatively judged for being single providers. A main point about the worthiness discourse, then, is that the experience of being in a client position first and foremost is shaped by the single mother's integration in the community. In other words, this is a discourse within normality.

The interactional stigmatization discourse – “the Fjord”

A strong pattern concerning stigmatisation experiences is that they occur among some of the young and unemployed clients, and that they are related to having a client relationship with the Social Welfare Office. There are, however, nuances in this picture, because a certain form of stigmatisation experience has been identified among some of the single mothers in “the Fjord”, who have a relationship to the Social Security Office and that are either working or in educational programmes. The context for this stigmatisation experience is the personal interaction between the individual client and the official. The main problem for some of the single mothers is that the content of this interaction made them look upon themselves as dependent and pleading for support to which they are formally entitled. This means that stigmatisation need not solely be restricted to means-testing agencies of the welfare state. This is in conjunction with the writings of Colton et al. (1997), which underlined that even universal services may be delivered in such a way that the client experiences as stigmatising. This is also in line with street-level theory underlining the importance of the individual street-level bureaucrat with regard to service delivery. The main point is the character of the communication between the client and the official regardless of type of agency.

How single mothers are judged as clients by local people

In both communities, one representative discourse on the judgment of single mothers as clients was identified: the worthiness discourse.

The worthiness discourse–“the Fjord” and “the Bay”

This is the sole judgment discourse related to the single mothers in “the Fjord” as well as in “the Bay”. Single mothers are judged as worthy as they are believed to combine their client position with being normal and at work. They are also judged as worthy because they are taking care of a child on their own, and because they are generally economically less well off than other social categories (cf. Halvorsen and Stjernø 2008).

The worthiness of the single mothers is related to the judgment criteria presented in chapter one: work ethic, willpower and conduct of life. Since the single mothers are seen as either being employed or undertaking an educational programme, their work ethic is not questioned. In “the Fjord”, the single mothers are seen as adapting to an industrial and secular work ethic (cf. Hassal et al 2005; Mudrack 1997) prominent to that community—the willingness to work at the Fordistic fish industry. In “the Bay”, it takes less to be judged as adapting to the work ethic since “work” may represent a wide range of occupations. This means that living up to the work ethic in “the Bay” is more elastic than in “the Fjord”. In “the Bay”, there are more and qualitative different ways to show one’s work ethic related to the individual’s specific interests, talents and need for individual growth (cf. Herman 2002; Izzo 2001; Hill 1992, 1996; Yankelovich and Harmon 1988; Sennet 2003).

Because the single mothers are judged to either be willing to work or study, then their willpower is not questioned as there is no reason to believe that the client position is a replacement for living up to the local work ethic. As the single mothers are seen as staying away from drug abuse and excessive partying, and as single motherhood at the present time is neither in “the Fjord” nor “the Bay” denounced on moral or religious grounds (cf. also Page 1988; Falk 2001), then their conduct of life is not negatively questioned or judged. The consequence of this is that the single mothers are judged as worthy clients with the local street-level bureaucracies.

How do the street-level bureaucrats at the local welfare bureaucracies implement the activation policy towards young single mothers?

In chapter five, I suggested that the street-level bureaucracies were of a distinct character; embedded in “the Fjord” and disembedded¹⁶⁴ in “the Bay”. I shall, therefore, clearly distinguish between the two communities and street-level bureaucracies regarding implementation discourses related to the single mothers.

A discourse of embeddedness:

The worthiness discourse in “the Fjord”

This discourse is found among officials at the Social Security Office in “the Fjord” and combines beliefs with regard to institutional aspects of this office and norms that are rooted in the local secular work ethic of this community. The office is seen as applying strict rules and entitlement in service delivery (cf. Weber 1971; Helgøy et al. 2010), and these rules fit with

¹⁶⁴ The concepts of embeddedness and disembeddedness were developed in chapter five. See also Granovetter (1985) and Evans (1995) in relation to the concept of embeddedness.

the young single mothers willingness and ability to adapt to the work regime of the fish industry—and for this the single mothers are praised at the Social Security Office. The normative content of this discourse is almost identical to the worthiness discourse related to the judgment of single mothers by local people in “the Fjord”. Then, the firm access rules at the Social Security Office fits “hand in glove” with the single mothers’ behaviour—in fact this office is understood to be the office for those who are willing to work within the labour market frames of “the Fjord”, cf. also the accusation of the young clients at the Social Welfare Office as lazy. This combination of bureaucratic traits and local norms should be understood on the background that the Social Security Office in this community is penetrated by the local work ethic, and therefore is “embedded”.

A discourse of disembeddedness:

The universalism/rights-oriented discourse in “the Bay”

In “the Bay”, the single mothers have displayed themselves in ways that resemble the situation in “the Fjord” –they are either at work or studying—which also means that implementation of the activation policy towards these single mothers boils down to bureaucratic control work. The Social Security Office in “the Bay” is, however, not embedded in a local work ethic, and therefore norms related to the local industries do not affect this office. This means that neither the local labour market nor traits of the single mothers becomes of much importance when processing them. What is believed to be of importance for the single mother is to belong to a service that is characterised by strict rules and universalism (cf. Weber 1971; Helgøy et al 2010). This is believed to prevent the single mothers from negative experiences related to psychological costs during interaction, labelling and stigmatisation—phenomena that is believed to arise if one “has to” seek help at the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay”, as this relationship is understood as forcing clients to “beg for help”. It is worthwhile to remember that related to this argument there is no accusation of the (young) clientele at the Social Welfare Office: they are not judged as lazy and the Social Welfare Office is not blamed for supporting lazy clients. Moreover, the universalism/rights-oriented discourse focus on systemic aspects and differences within the total system of the welfare state: universal and rights-oriented services, and the agencies that deliver them, secure positive experiences for (for instance) the single mothers, while the means-testing system at the Social Welfare Office creates stigmatisation and humiliation towards its clients because they are pressured into a deviant and dependent position. This type of effect of means-testing delivery systems has been addressed in some of the literature presented in chapter one (cf.

Lipsky 1980; Titmuss 1968; Spicker 1984; Fraser and Gordon 1994). The belief that affiliation with (only) the Social Security Office has positive effects for their clients seems to be in conjunction with the theories put forth by, for instance, Titmuss (1968), that universal and “invisible” services functions this way.

Unemployed youth

How the unemployed youth experience being clients

Among unemployed youth, the following discourses on experiences were identified: the nonvoluntariness/stigmatization discourse; the worthiness discourse; the low bureaucratic efficiency discourse; and the acceptance discourse.

The nonvoluntariness and stigmatisation discourse—“the Fjord” and “the Bay”

Nonvoluntariness

The nonvoluntariness experience (cf. Lipsky 1980; Braithewaite 2009) was most clearly expressed among young and unemployed clients in “the Fjord”. This may be related to their circumstance of being in a “threshold” position—their position as client, especially with the Social Welfare Office, was new and unfamiliar to them. The young and unemployed clients in “the Bay”, however, were not greatly preoccupied with the fact that they were in the client position. This can be related to their situation of being out of work for long periods of time and that they had additional problems. In a way, they accepted the relationship to the local street-level bureaucracy because they realised they were in need of public relief.

The nonvoluntariness experience is of a structural kind. One sees the need to seek help at the Social Welfare Office either because one does not fit with the local working life in “the Fjord” (respondent F-4) or because other sources of economic support are no longer believed to be available (respondent F-5). To seek help at the Social Welfare Office, then, represents breaking with the norm by saying that one should cope financially without becoming a client of this particular office. The experience of F-4 may be linked to a discussion on the concept of work ethic. As mentioned in chapter one, writers such as Hill (1992,1996), Yankelovich and Harmon (1998), Herman (2002) and Izzo (2001) stressed that the work ethic today has become conditional in the sense that it is connected to the specific interests, talents and needs of the individual. The point here is that the working life of “the Fjord” has few opportunities outside the fish industry (cf. chapter three and five). This means that individuals who have other ways to express their work ethic do not fit very well with the working life in this community and, thus, may gain an unwanted client position.

Stigmatisation

When nonvoluntariness client position is the issue stigmatisation is also likely to be an adjoining experience, as one believes that a specific client position is labelled as a negative position in the community. This seems to be typical in relation to the Social Welfare Office as this office is believed to be an office serving persons that break from the norm of the work ethic. As underlined by Lipsky (1980) and others (cf. Titmuss 1968), means-testing arrangements may be labelled as serving persons breaking from such norms. An example of this was the need, reported by some clients, to perform information control (cf. Goffman 1963; Page 1988) by hiding an embarrassing bureaucracy relationship from the people living in the community. This illustrates that social construction of reality “cognitively” may lead to specific consequences and actions (cf. Thomas and Thomas 1928).

The street-level bureaucracy, as such, may also contribute to stigmatisation in various ways. This was the case, for instance, when the client experienced being (falsely) accused as a drug addict (cf. Fraser and Gordon 1994) because of the impression the official had of the client (cf. the experience of F-5). This form of stigmatisation was underlined by Lipsky (1980) as something that might occur in the processing of clients. For some clients that have a relationship to this office, the experience of *psychological costs* is part of the stigma picture, as the decision rules at this office (high degree of discretion) causes clients to talk about embarrassing matters, as well as being exposed to others while in the client position, cf. Schaffer and Huang (1975) and Bleiklie, Dahl Jacobsen and Thorsvik (1997). The experience of B-10 was illustrative in that respect. According to Lipsky (1980), *referrals* is a practice that represents uncertain outcomes for the client. An example of how this is related to stigmatisation was the experience of B-3, who believed that to be sent to a special institution for young persons with behavioural problems in fact labelled him and, thus, gave him a bad reputation in the community, which restricted his opportunities with the local labour and housing markets. According to Lipsky (1980) and others (cf. Thoren 2008), *creaming* is a typical street-level practice, meaning to favour certain individuals belonging to a client population by giving them special attention and additional chances in the job mediation process. It is interesting to witness the consequences of not being “creamed” and how this may be linked to stigmatisation. The experience of B-3 is illustrative in this point. He was motivated to take on a certain job, but experienced that the official did not believe in him because of his past failures in the job mediation processes. B-3 was labelled and stereotyped as a person without any future potential of being integrated on the local labour market.

Stigmatisation from street-level bureaucracies may also be related to the design of work programmes (cf. Kildal 1998). An example of this is the experience of F-5 who believed that modest wages offered by the Local Employment Office gave an impression of him in the community as a deviant person.

The worthiness discourse – “the Fjord”

In “*the Fjord*”, some young and unemployed clients believe the client position to be worthy in the sense that they deserve help from the public because they have a “real” and legitimate problem. Then the alleged negative judgments of clients by local people are set aside. This is a discourse outside of normality, where the link to the wider community is absent and the focus is on the individual client as he sees his own specific situation, problems and needs.

The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse – “the Bay”

This discourse was identified among some of the young and unemployed clients in “*the Bay*”. I do not believe it is the characteristics of this community that has “produced” this discourse; it is that those clients with severe problems and significant time in the client position happen to be from “the Bay”. This is, namely, a type of experience that grows out of being in the client position for a lengthy time. These are also clients that are difficult to integrate into the local labour market because they have few formal skills, little work training, additional problems and probably a negative reputation in the community (cf. also Rønsen and Skardhamar 2009; Hammer and Hyggen 2006; Dahl and Lorentzen 2005).

Lipsky (1980) underlined that *referrals* might imply assisting with clients without really dealing with them. The experience of B-10 was about this, as he experienced the recurring referrals between the three street-level bureaucracies studied here as not qualifying him for the working life. This is a classic bureaucracy criticism related to the lack of coordination between specialised agencies that work on the same individual client (cf. Weber 1971; Pedersen 1996). This form of bureaucracy critique has also been related to challenges with regard to the implementation of the activation policy, cf. Lødemel (1998) and Smith (2000) in chapter one. The experience of not being dealt with is also related to some consequences of *turnover* in one specific street-level bureaucracy, and the experiences of B-8 illustrate this. Organizations with a certain number of officials provide for the possibility for a client begin again with different officials without receiving any real help in the mediation process. When one compares the street-level bureaucracies in the two communities, it seems arguable that turnover consequences like those described above are more likely to appear in “the Bay” than

in “the Fjord”, as the agencies in the former community have far more officials that may be part of internal turnover processes. Part of this discourse were also negative experiences with work programmes, since they were seen to lack the ability to empower the individual client to prepare for the working life. Rather than being tailor-made arrangements suited to the needs and qualifications of the individual, they were seen to be standard responses to certain types of clients (cf. the experience of B-6). This type of negative experience is in conjunction with some critical writings on the implementation of the activation policy (cf. Lødemel 1998; Smith 2000), underlining the importance of avoiding standard solutions to specific needs.

The acceptance discourse–“the Bay”

This discourse was identified among some of the young and unemployed clients in “*the Bay*”. A common trait was that they had accepted their position as client, but for a variety of reasons. This discourse is distinct from the worthiness discourses. Instead of focusing on the combination of work/education and client position, or the belief that one deserves support from the welfare state because one has “real” problems—which is typical of the worthiness discourses—the acceptance discourse is about another aspect. The acceptance discourse is about not allowing negative judgments of clients’ positions in the community penetrate one’s own individual experiences of being in such a position. One variant of this is when belonging to a subculture within the community protects one from negative judgments. A striking example of this was the experience of B-6 with regard to his relationship to the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay”. He was socialized into the role as a client with this office by his next of kin, since his brother had persuaded him to establish such a relationship. In his family, this was seen as acceptable and normal, and not as a deviant act. This variant of the acceptance discourse is in conjunction with sociological writings underlining the importance of belonging to subcultures or “social enclaves” that represent other norms than those represented by the majority in a community (cf. Cohen 1955; Bloch and Niederhoffer 1958; Jonsson 1969; Willis 1977; Bjørge and Carlsson 1999; Carlsson 2005; Braithewaite 2009 and Sandberg and Pedersen 2010).

The experience of B-11 represents a slightly different variant of this discourse. For him, it is not socialization through affiliation with a subculture (peer-group or family) that is the issue, rather it is the individualistic (cf. Beck 1992; Giddens 1990, 1991; Bauman 2001; Demuth 2004) trait that comes to the fore. He was so preoccupied with his own problems in life that he was unable to reflect upon what others in the community might think of him as a client with

the local street-level bureaucracies. The individualistic traits of B-11 were as a result of him having severe social problems.

B-7 had fewer social problems. She had some work experience, but needed support by local street-level bureaucracies since at that moment she was on rehabilitation. She was also within the acceptance discourse due to individualistic traits—she did not let alleged negative judgments by people in “the Bay” penetrate her experiences as a client. She believed that people in the community could not really possess knowledge on her situation, and she was able to think of the local street-level bureaucracies as agencies which could offer her the services to which she believed she was “entitled”. She was not primarily focusing upon her personal need for help, but on the local street-level bureaucracies as legitimate providers of welfare services.

How unemployed youth are judged as clients by local people

In both communities, two discourses on judgments of unemployed youth as clients could be found: the laziness discourse and the complexity discourse.

The laziness discourse—dominant in “the Fjord”, but also found in “the Bay”

This discourse was identified in both communities, but there are some important differences between “the Fjord” and “the Bay”. It is reasonable to state that this discourse has a stronger footing among local people in “the Fjord”, because of a comparatively strong working class and a weaker middle class (as compared to “the Bay”). The laziness discourse is heavily connected to notions with regard to the working life in the communities.

The respondents within this discourse look upon themselves as individuals that support and live up to the local and secular *work ethic* (cf. Hassall et al 2005; Mudrack 1997) in their communities. Young and (long-term) unemployed clients are judged as not living up to the local work ethic. A driving force behind this judgment is that there is a belief among the respondents that there is work to be found locally for everyone that wants to work.

Young and unemployed clients are also judged as lacking *willpower*. This means that they are accused of replacing legitimate norms and actions with bad or illegitimate ones. This does not concern the young client’s relationship to the local working life, but to their connection with the street-level bureaucracies. Rather than to look upon these bureaucracies as institutions delivering necessary help to the young and unemployed clients, the bureaucracies are seen as institutions that “fit” with the clients’ temptations to replace work with public funding for their “idleness”. In this context, one should remember that some of the respondents within this

discourse explicitly stated that the local street-level bureaucracies—especially the Social Welfare Office—were judged by them to be institutions designed to support “lazy clients”. In “the Fjord”, it was also seen as laziness to appear on the list produced by the Local Employment Office displaying idle and long-term unemployed workers.

This judgment of the willpower question should be seen in relationship to the respondent’s ideas about the young and unemployed clients’ *conduct of life*. Conduct of life is related to “idleness”, health and drug related issues, as the respondents within this discourse see it. The main issue for the respondents within the laziness discourse is that they judge these issues to be either false health problems or a deviant form of conduct of life, such as alcohol and drug abuse, is a chosen “lifestyle”, and not as problems that deserve public relief.

With regard to work ethic, willpower and conduct of life the main point seen from the respondents’ is that the young and unemployed clients are negatively judged on all of these dimensions by those respondents that represent the laziness discourse.

Applying theoretical perspectives presented in chapter one, the clients are then *stigmatised* by these respondents. The stigmatisation concept is an apt concept to use, because as the young and unemployed clients are negatively labelled, they are judged to represent a weak will, a core meaning of the stigmatisation concept (cf. Page 1988). These clients are judged as breaking the norm of reciprocity—they are seen as not living up to the major norms of the community especially relating to their non-participation in the local working life, and this is judged to be a chosen (cf. Neuberg, Smith and Asher 2000) and permanent (cf. Brigham 1971) behaviour among the young and unemployed clients. Furthermore, these clients are stigmatised as they represent a symbolic threat to the norms of the working population in the community, because the central norms in the local culture are then questioned or undermined by their adaption (cf. Stangor and Crandall 2000). This becomes especially visible in “the Fjord” as work related norms there are clearly linked to the dominant fish industry. The stigmatisation of the young and unemployed clients does not rest upon specific knowledge of these clients as individual human beings (cf. Crocker 1999). Rather the judgment is based upon stereotypes, something that is typical of collective or tribal forms of stigmatisation, for instance related to social categories believed to represent “the weak will” (cf. Goffman 1963; Biernat and Dovidio 2000). Biernat and Dovidio (2000) apply the concepts of groupiness and role division when explaining stereotyped judgments of human beings. Groupiness means to define individuals as belonging to a certain social category that shares common traits. This is evident in the material and typical of the laziness discourse in the communities, as “laziness” is judged to be *the* typical reason for being a client, when it comes to the young and

unemployed clients in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”. The concept of role division means to develop theories on what human beings in certain roles are capable of doing. In the material from the communities, this should be linked to the fact that the clients studied are young persons (in their 20s), and the respondents representing the laziness discourse basically believe that young persons should be capable of working, and thus to be a long-term unemployed client is surrounded by suspicion—it is not seen as reasonable to think that persons in that age range are “worn out”. Page (1988) underlined that people who are stigmatised for representing a “weak will” are surrounded by hostility from the stigmatisers. According to Hill (1992, 1996), people that do not live up to the work ethic are seen as lazy and are surrounded by contempt. This is also typical when analysing the laziness discourse—young and unemployed clients provoke those who believe that they themselves represent a strong work ethic. Some writers suggest that supporting the (protestant) work ethic implies the value orientation of individualism, underlining personal freedom, self-reliance, devotion to work and achievement. This again leads to stigmatisation of those not participating in the working life because this behaviour is judged to be a deviancy and not an unfortunate disadvantage (cf. Crandall 2000; Katz and Hass 1988; Fong 2007).

The complexity discourse—dominant in “the Bay”, but also found in “the Fjord”

The complexity discourse (related to the young and unemployed clients) was identified in both communities. However, it appears that this discourse has a more profound basis in “the Bay” than in “the Fjord”. One reason behind this is the strong position of the middle class in “the Bay” (cf. chapter three). Another distinction between the communities regarding the complexity discourse is that in “the Bay”, this discourse partly involves judgments concerning the efficiency of the local street-level bureaucracies, and not just properties related to the clients.

If we compare the complexity discourse to the laziness discourse, we find that the former discourse is related differently to the judgment criteria; the work ethic, willpower and conduct of life. In the complexity discourse, the young and unemployed clients in the two communities are not accused of lacking willingness to work or of not having willpower to choose “the right decision”. Generally, the unemployment trait is connected to the belief that these clients have “real” problems that deserve help from the local street-level bureaucracies. Respondents within the complexity discourse do not question the young and unemployed clients’ *willingness* to work (or study), but rather question their *ability* to perform and become

integrated in the local labour market—at the moment. This also means that lack of reciprocity does not become a concern (contrary to the laziness discourse).

Traits related to conduct of life, such as drug abuse, is not seen as a chosen way of life, but rather judged to be “illnesses” that need and deserve treatment from the agencies of the welfare state.

Applying theoretical perspectives introduced in chapter one to illuminate the complexity discourse, I suggest to *inverse* ideas found in the literature on stigmatization. In a way, the complexity discourse implies non-stigmatisation of the young and unemployed clients.

One reason for stigmatization, according to Stangor and Crandall (2000), was that certain individuals in society were considered to be a symbolic *threat* to the society; because a deviant adaptation among some clients represents an undermining of core norms in the society. It is quite obvious that respondents within the complexity discourse do not see the young and unemployed clients as representing such a threat. There are probably two reasons for this when examining the situation in the two communities. First, if one considers young and unemployed clients as lacking the ability to live up to work-related norms central to the community, then threat does not become a concern, as disability does not invoke judgments that question the norms of the clients in this field. Second, occupational distance from the core industrial work (at the operational level) will most likely reduce the tendency to judge long-term unemployment among youth as a threat. For instance, in “the Fjord”, the threat (found within the laziness discourse) was very much connected to the belief that some young clients refuse to work for the fish industry (at the operational level). Occupational distance seems of relevance here as the complexity discourse typically is found among middle class respondents, and especially in “the Bay”.

A second reason for stigmatization according to, for instance, Goffman (1963) and Biernat and Davido (2000), is that clients are categorized in terms of *stereotypes*, related to theories regarding groupiness and role division. It has already been underlined that respondents within the complexity discourse refrain from this, because of the consequences of not having insight into the matter, because they think it is an enigma why some young individuals become long-term unemployed clients or that they believe a multifactor explanation is needed to understand their situation. The respondents within the complexity discourse do not heavily rely upon groupiness when judging the clients, because they partly believe that one must look at an individual and specific life history to be able to judge them. This is probably typical for respondents that have some sort of social connection to the clients, a phenomenon that fosters individual judgments of the client. Role division then does not become a central trait of how

respondents within the complexity discourse judge the young and unemployed clients. Role division would here imply that all young persons are able to work. Being part of the complexity discourse implies the recognition that even some youth might have complex problems that make it reasonable that they have severe barriers in becoming integrated in the local labour market.

A third aspect of stigmatization refers to the theory of *permanence* in the deviant position (cf. Brigham 1971). Individuals that are believed to break with norms not once as an exception, but as a repeating pattern over time will be negatively labelled and stigmatized. This was typical for the laziness discourse. Respondents within the complexity discourse, however, have a different approach to the permanence phenomenon. Length in the client position (as well as being unemployed) is likely to be judged as an example of the client having real and complex problems. Then, at least some of the respondents within the complexity discourse believe that patterns of unfortunate permanence among clients might be changed. A logical consequence of the complexity approach is that processes of change might take time, that there is no simple and “individual” cure available and that clients need help from, for instance, street-level bureaucracies in change processes. In fact, the street-level bureaucracies are by some respondents given a clear responsibility in change processes, as it is underlined that they must be capable of identifying traits of the young clients to build upon in such processes (cf. Antonovsky 2000). This represents a striking difference to the laziness discourse, which dismisses the permanence as something representing a period of real problems and hardship, and where the simple individual “cure” is to pull oneself together (“stop being lazy”).

The fourth aspect I would like to point out is how respondents within the complexity discourse relate to the question of *knowledge* when they judge the young and unemployed clients. These respondents acknowledge uncertainty with regard to this; they do not take for granted the reason behind the client position. Some take the consequence of little insight into the matter and refrain from really judging them at all. Others build upon individual knowledge produced through different forms of personal knowledge stemming from social interaction with these clients. A basic feature also is to allow for the possibility that various explanations must be acknowledged as plausible, as well as the question remaining as an unsolved matter. This is a striking difference to the laziness discourse, where respondents within that discourse more or less take it for granted what the reason is: laziness. Respondents within the laziness discourse do not hesitate to form judgments of these clients even if they also acknowledge that they have limited individual knowledge on them.

How do the street-level bureaucrats at the local welfare bureaucracies implement the activation policy towards unemployed youth?

In chapter five, I suggested that the street-level bureaucracies were of a distinct character; embedded in “the Fjord” and disembedded in “the Bay”. I shall therefore clearly distinguish between the two communities and street-level bureaucracies regarding implementation discourses related to the unemployed youth.

Discourses of embeddedness:

The laziness discourse in “the Fjord”

The laziness discourse related to young and unemployed clients in “the Fjord” is found among street-level bureaucrats at the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office when they relate to young clients who have a main affiliation with the Social Welfare Office, and with whom they, as officials, have minor contact. The description of the young and unemployed clients resembles the way local people, within their laziness discourse, have described them. This involves the following elements: these clients are seen as having fake problems, their unemployment situation is a chosen “lifestyle”, and it has become a trend to seek help at the Social Welfare Office as a replacement for a willingness to work for the local fish industry. The street-level bureaucrats within this discourse also believe that young persons should have no reason to be unemployed. The general viewpoint within this discourse, then, is that the young and unemployed clients lack willpower, do not support the local work ethic and issues related to conduct of life are not seen as representing problems that deserve attention from public agencies. The underlying idea is that these young clients ought to “pull oneself together” and accept a local job.

When these clients encounter the local street-level bureaucracies, they are looked upon as rejecting rules and demands central to the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office, and rather “enjoy” the vague and undemanding decision rules at the Social Welfare Office, an office seen by the bearers of this laziness discourse as supporting idle and lazy youth in “the Fjord”. Even if these clients are defined as lazy, the reality seems to be that they have problems related to being processed by the street-level bureaucracies. Accusations of laziness seem to be communicated through the organisational arrangement of “basis teams”, and the clients are supposed to be referred to employment by making them register with the Local Employment Office. Here lies a difference between the laziness discourse among local people and the street-level bureaucrats: local people judge them, the street-level bureaucrats both classify and act towards them.

Looking at street-level bureaucracy implementation forms it is quite obvious that bearers of the laziness discourse *stigmatise* these clients by accusing them and giving them a negative label in the community because they are seen as representing a weak will (cf. Page 1988). This stigmatisation is done through processes of categorisation where one single aspect is given weight; namely, that these clients are understood as being unwilling to work, and were other reasons for being unemployed and clients at the Social Welfare Office are overlooked. It is also likely to think that these clients are affected by *psychological costs* through the basis teams and when interacting with the officials that are within the laziness discourse—in the form of accusations. The clients believed to be lazy are not left completely “idle”, because when the context for rendering services to them is the activation policy, then they are supposed to find work via the Local Employment Office. They are, in other words, linked to what Lipsky (1980) termed *referrals*. It is likely that these clients are not necessarily able to work (cf. Slettebø 2000) or wanted in the local companies, and therefore the consequences for them by being referred seem to be uncertain¹⁶⁵. A main point with regard to the laziness discourse is that demands and referrals “should” be conditions that these clients are required to meet.

The complexity discourse in “the Fjord”

The complexity discourse is identified at the Local Employment Office and especially at the Social Welfare Office. This discourse is related to long-term unemployed youth with whom the officials at these offices work closely. To work closely with specific clients produces the belief that the official, over time, has gained in depth knowledge on the clients’ present and past problem-situation, and therefore “knows” the complexity of his or her condition. This includes acknowledging that the client might have problems related to: health; a marginal relationship to work; trained incapacity; being blacklisted in the local companies; or social inheritance belonging to families that traditionally have been on the outside of the formal economy in “the Fjord”. This means that the officials within the complexity discourse display a nuanced perspective on these clients; there is no single or purely individual explanation concerning their client’s position and unemployment situation. This could be a result of working with marginal individuals, who have a long-lasting relationship to the street-level bureaucracies, and a tendency at the Social Welfare Office to work with clients according to “phases”, which implies digging deeper over time into their social background and problems.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. The “Complexity discourse” below.

The officials within this discourse have one thing in common: they recognise the complexity of the client's situation related to the past and the present. The divide occurs when one is judging the client's future potential for becoming integrated into the local labour market. Especially at the Social Welfare Office, this divide seems to follow the distinction between veterans and newcomers in the organisation. At this office, the veteran is embedded in the local work ethic and the newcomer, typically a formally educated social worker emigrated from southern parts of Norway, tries to apply a professional knowledge and at the outset is unaware of the client's history. The main divide between veterans and newcomers in relation to working with clients is that the former position implies considering that the actual client has no future potential since he is greatly limited and that "all" efforts have been made in the past to render help, and therefore further search for new possibilities are worthless. The newcomer, on the other hand, is more likely to start fresh with these clients, and give them new chances to become integrated with the local labour market. This means that the consequences of being within this discourse vary with the degree of embeddedness within the local context and time in service at the office.

With regard to implementation forms derived from the street-level bureaucracy theory the following can be stated. These officials clearly perform *categorisations* when working with them. These categorisations typically focus upon traits of the young and unemployed clients, and represent a mix of complex descriptions and lack of ability to perform work. Categorisations in general may involve simplification in the understanding of clients, and this is most typical when the veterans are reasoning about their clients' future potential as workers in "the Fjord", as the future of the client concerning living up to the activation policy is believed to be a blue-print of their past. According to Lipsky (1980), street-level bureaucrats may also become involved in a secondary form of categorisation called *rubber stamping*, which means to base one's judgments of clients upon those provided by other street-level bureaucrats. At the Social Welfare Office in "the Fjord", a newcomer (the formally educated social worker) reported on a practice that resemble rubber stamping. The newcomer was encouraged by veterans at the office "to read the old files" on their long-term clients and base her judgment of them on this past and probably biased information—when she is going to make up her mind what ought to be done towards them.

How the veterans categorise these clients implies *stigmatisation*; as these clients are regarded as having long-lasting negative traits, for instance when the veteran at the Social Welfare Office believes that belonging to certain families in the community implies that the client is unable to be mediated into work because they lack "working genes".

Another implementation form underlined by Lipsky and others is *creaming* (cf. Lipsky 1980; Marston and McDonald 2006; Thoren 2008). This means that certain clients out of the total client population are favoured by the street-level bureaucrats, while others are given less attention. It is quite obvious that the veteran position implies “giving up” on specific clients, when they are, as one official stated, “put in the drawer” because they are believed to lack the potential to find work. In “the Fjord”, it is likely that clients seen as able to perform work at the fish industry will be “creamed”, something that represents a narrow frame for the creaming. It is relevant to remember the idea put forth by the newcomer at the Social Welfare Office in “the Fjord”, that some of their clients really needed help from another job-finder than the Local Employment Office.

The last street-level implementation form mentioned in chapter one is *referrals*. According to Lipsky, referrals may either function as real and rational help, or on the other hand represent an irrational and counterproductive practice where the client is not really receiving any help or betterment of their situation by being transferred from one agency to another. Under the activation policy, there seems to be a strong pressure on linking clients, including those with complex problems, to the labour market by making them register with the Local Employment Office and be presented as real applicants for work. The respondents within the complexity discourse might be expected to be rather cautious of engaging in referrals with regard to these clients. However, it seems that decisions based on “local rationality” at the street-level bureaucracies—in chapter five exemplified as “countermoves” as well as rather mechanical referral practices as a response to the general aims of the national activation policy (cf. Thoren 2008) —forces some of these clients to be (sought) mediated to work, when their situation is that they, at the present, are unable to perform work (cf. Slettebø 2000). Some of them are also “blacklisted” by the local companies in “the Fjord” as untrustworthy workers, and thus unwanted in the companies.

Discourses of *disembeddedness*:

The two sides of the reflexive discourse in “the Bay”

As mentioned in chapter five, the street-level bureaucracy discourse on implementation in “the Bay” is focused on the level of organization and profession, and not primarily on traits of the individual clients. This means that the respondents engage in a reflection of positive and negative aspects of implementation of the activation policy towards the young and unemployed clients within and between the offices studied here. A basic assumption underlying this reflexive discourse is that the young and unemployed clients have complex

problems related to health, affiliations with subcultures and traits of marginalization that represent a challenge for the street-level bureaucracies when working with these clients. I present each of these discourses by distinguishing between their organizational and professional basis.

The deviance contributing discourse

One organizational aspect focused in this discourse is the probable negative effects of *internal turnover* patterns, mainly at the Local Employment Office, on some of their long-term young clients. It is acknowledged that some of these clients have to change officials relatively often. This has been commented upon by respondents at this office and at other offices in “the Bay” as well, and is mentioned in the chapter on client experiences. Two negative effects of this come to the fore, which the street-level bureaucrats are aware of and reflect upon. To change officials often for clients with complex problems seems to increase the psychological costs, as a burdensome client story has to be repeated several times. This is not only understood as a form of humiliating encounter with a bureaucratic organization “here and now”, but might also represent the repeating of the client’s deviant position in the community.

The internal turnover also might result in less effective services for these clients as there is a probability that discontinuity in the official–client relation, and may mean that the progress in working with the specific client is endangered when it comes to processes of change and securing labour market entry, cf. client respondent B-8’s experience of “stand easy-ness”, as well as the discourse among some of the young and unemployed clients in “the Bay” titled “The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse” presented above.

A second organisational aspect central to the deviance contributing discourse is the critical viewpoints on *referral* practices among the three offices. According to Lipsky (1980), referrals were seen as having uncertain effects upon clients; they may serve as rational help or they may represent futility. Referrals are a central element in the activation policy and the general goal of this policy is to direct most clients towards work. The reflexiveness discovered among the street-level bureaucrats in “the Bay” concerning referrals of young and unemployed clients becomes explicit when one compares the viewpoints on this matter at the Social Welfare Office, /the Social Security Office *and* the Local Employment Office. The two former offices are strongly aware that some of their young clients have complex problems that genuinely represent barriers towards labour market entry, but want the Local Employment Office to help them in the job-finding process, and are therefore referred to that office. This may imply that the referral practice at the Social Welfare Office takes the shape of “mass-

referrals” (cf. Thorèn 2008), where the practice is characterised by an automatic routine. This seems to be understood at the Local Employment Office, which believes that these clients, in relation to motivation and complex problems, are not ready to be successfully mediated to the local working life. A specific example of this is when officials at the Local Employment Office judge clients they receive from the Social Welfare Office to still strive towards employment with a drug problem that makes it unrealistic to find a job for them. The reflexive dimension in relation to the referral practice is connected to the awareness that these offices lack sufficient coordination when dealing with these clients; that decisions are performed in the “wrong sequence of time” and clients are transferred before their complex problems have been addressed and attempted to be solved. A secondary effect of this practice may be that these clients are not “creamed” in the sense that the Local Employment Office does not prioritised them¹⁶⁶, and that the referral does not lead to its final result of work, and that this form of referral practice stigmatises these clients as they will be labelled as unreliable and unwanted work power in the community. In the context of the activation policy, the goal of a referral process is work or placements for the client, and sometimes clients with complex problems are placed in certain work arrangements. At the Social Welfare Office, one respondent reflected on a practice at the Local Employment Office with regard to “sheltered workshops”. Such workshops were originally presented as designed for persons with limited mental ability, but then one respondent recognised that the Local Employment Office also used these arrangements for persons with mental and drug-related problems. At the Social Welfare Office, it was suggested that this composition lead to a “double segregation”, as respondent B-52 named it, with the believed consequence that this implied singling out persons as belonging to a category of individuals who will be seen as deviants in the community. The reflexive element is quite obvious: deviance is not a property of the individual client, but something to which the street-level bureaucracies, through their decisions with regard to the organization of services, contribute to.

The Social Welfare Office may also engage in other types of referrals than those related to mediation to work, such as referring young clients to institutions for people with behavioural problems. At the Social Welfare Office, it was recognised that such practices might be negative for clients because they could become labelled (“marked for life”, as B-49 termed it). This was also the experience of client respondent B-3, who experienced that such a referral labelled him negatively, and made his chances with the local labour and housing markets

¹⁶⁶ This was something the Local Employment Office was criticized for at the Social Welfare Office.

difficult. The Social Welfare Office applies an unclear technology where the causal relationship between actions (such as referrals) and outcomes or consequences is unpredictable (cf. Cruikshank 1999)—they might represent labelling and stigmatisation. The reflexive aspect here is that the social worker is able to reflect upon the uncertain outcomes of discretionary decisions.

A third reflexive element is something which is a typical part of street-level practice, namely *categorizations* (Lipsky 1980), also in chapter five called classifications. These may be rooted in the bureaucratic human service organization, but also inherent in the work of professionals who are employed in such organizations. The first reflexive element with regard to categorizations is the belief that the degree and “danger” connected to this follows differences between the offices. It is believed at the Social Security Office that their focus on bureaucratic access rules reduces the importance of categorizations and that this practice is more profound and risky at agencies applying categorizations as part of treating the clients, such as the Social Welfare Office, the Local Employment Office and medical expertise. A second reflexive element concerning categorization is the acknowledgment that labelling of clients may become an unfortunate outcome, because the logic of bureaucracy sometimes implies labelling a client negatively in order to provide assistance from the system. An illustration of this is a practice said to take place at the Local Employment Office in “the Bay”: sometimes young clients are difficult to include in a programme for work related rehabilitation, as they do not have a medical diagnosis—but have a social problem. Then, inclusion in this programme might be appropriate if the client is defined as “socially inhibited” in relation to the job-finding process. A similar practice of securing access to services by describing a problem situation as bad “as possible” has been addressed by Pihl (2002) in her work on special teaching, suggesting that this has stigmatizing effects upon the client. There are also negative consequences of categorizing clients in terms of their past performances or traits. This was mentioned at the Local Employment Office and related to the possible practice of “rubber stamping” (cf. Lipsky 1980). The problem here is that these forms of stereotyping might “cement” the image of clients, overlooking their present situation and future potential. An official at the Local Employment Office illustrated this type of action when she referred to the practice of having a dialogue with the client only about the present, instead of relying upon past knowledge of him.

Finally, reflections on categorizations were also stated at the Social Welfare Office related to the focus of the social worker professional in the process of rendering aid to the client. Because the client has complex problems, professional training oriented towards delving into

problems and the need to perform “diagnosis”, there is a tendency for these types of professionals to focus on problematic and negative sides of the client (cf. Fischer and Brodsky 1978; Jensen and Froestad 1984). This type of focus has been criticized by, for instance, Antonovsky (2000), who stresses that individuals in need of help and professionals rendering help ought to be more “balanced”—as a primary focus on the problems will be counterproductive in the efforts of rendering effective help to clients. Respondent B-52 saw the importance of “eye-openers” in the form of situations and dialogues that question such a focus towards clients.

The last reflection to mention within this discourse is related to notions on *differences* between the offices. It is quite obvious that the means-test system of the Social Welfare Office is believed to emphasize deviance of the clients. This is a typical belief at the Social Security Office when the officials there comment upon the difference between the offices. At the Social Welfare Office, they recognized that they have low status in the community. Furthermore, there are aspects of the clients at this office that contribute to the deviance because of the exposure of the client position. The clients at the Social Welfare Office often have problems related to drug-abuse and this is revealed to other persons in the community, as the Social Welfare Office shares waiting room with other functions at City Hall. This may be related to stigmatization and the psychological costs for the clients, as this exposure is believed to jeopardize the dignity and self-esteem of the clients. Another point to mention is the importance of what might be called “social accessories” to the organization: to be a client at the Social Welfare Office represents a probability for being confronted with the “the Gang” subculture, to whom one belongs or with whom one wants to break social ties. This “encounter” may represent forces of counter socialization contrary to the efforts and goals of the Social Welfare Office, as well as increasing the psychological cost of establishing and maintain a relationship to this office.

The empowerment contributing discourse

Among the street-level bureaucrats in “the Bay”, there is also another side of the reflexive discourse: the empowerment contributing discourse. This discourse is not primarily related to traits of neither the individual client nor comparisons between clients regarding preconditions for them to break a circle of marginalization and thus become empowered (cf. Bookman and Morgen 1988; Dean 1999). Rather, the discourse is oriented towards organizational and professional conditions for contributions to empowerment, i.e., the way the respondents recognize this within their own setting.

The first element here is the believed *empowering effects of internal turnover* when working with the clients. The Social Welfare Office and the Local Employment Office in “the Bay” have so many officials that internal turnover may represent a conscious strategy in the work with clients. What is of importance here is that these bureaucrats have the ability to deal organisationally with relationships between officials and particular clients, that may involve the application of surplus knowledge (cf. Haugland 2000) and certain forms of prejudices towards them. At the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay”, it is realistic for a specific client to change officials if the relationship is seen as too close. This was underlined by officials at the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office. B-57, at the Local Employment Office, pointed to the possibility of being assigned a client that was her neighbour or someone she knew from other social settings. Sometimes this could present a problem, but there is the possibility to hand the case over to another official. B-59, who also worked at the Local Employment Office, saw a similar challenge. This official grew up in “the Bay” and stated that she knew some of the clients from the past. The decision rules at this office were seen by her as reducing the challenge connected to such relations, and if a problem still occurred in this respect, she saw as an advantage in her organisation of having the possibility to hand the case over to another official. She underlined that her team consisted of a sufficient number of officials to deal with such matters. The relational challenge and importance of the organisational ability to change officials, was also stressed at the Social Welfare Office. It was not just the closeness of the relationship in itself that came to the fore, but also the fact that some clients at this office are long-term clients and present attitudinal challenges for the social worker. B-52, the social worker and organisational veteran, acknowledged that he might know some of the clients at the office too well. This was related to clients that had been registered at the office for years, and even back to the days where they had a relationship to Child Services. B-49 pointed to situations where she had to deal with a neighbour, an acquaintance or someone that provoked her during their interaction. Both officials stressed the importance of having the ability to have another official look into the case. The main point here is that turnover among the officials, and in relation to specific clients, is believed to have an empowering effect because it reduces prejudice and promotes a “second opinion” on the client’s future ability to enter the labour market. The belief that turnover may have such effects—that it fosters innovation in the organization’s work—seems to have some support in the literature (cf. McNeill and Thompson 1971; Staw 1980), especially if newcomers to the organization are able to challenge the judgments of veterans. In the material from “the Bay”, the importance of recruiting newcomers to the organisation was underlined. An example of

this line of thought was put forth by B-49 at the Social Welfare Office. She stressed the importance of newcomers that exhibit the ability to question the things one, after a while, tends to take for granted at the office. Newcomers are likely to stress the importance of looking for the individual potential in a specific client, and not to stereotype them. Newcomers to an agency such as the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay” meant formally educated social workers. As a result, what they are able to challenge is perhaps not first and foremost professional cognitive structures, but those that may develop naturally as an organisational culture. Similar divisions between organisational newcomers and veterans seemed to exist at the Local Employment Office. At the time, for instance, B-58 had worked at the office for seven years, while B-59 had worked there for just six months. B-58 stated that as the years had gone by, she had fewer and fewer expectations towards jobless young persons, while B-59 stated that she met them with an open mind. B-57 had worked at the office for 18 years. In the context of discussing organisational newcomers and veterans it is worth contrasting the ideas of B-57 and B-59 concerning their perception of certain jobless young persons. B-57, the veteran, thought that some of them do not want to work nor are they suited to working and related this to their family background, while B-59 stressed that one cannot judge people on their history, since individuals are basically capable of changing directions in life.

The second element in this discourse is the belief that *categorisations* and *professional focus* may have empowering effects upon the clients. With regard to categorisations, ideas on empowering effects are found at the Local Employment Office as well as at the Social Welfare Office. Respondents B-58 (the Local Employment Office) and B-49 (the Social Welfare Office) may serve as illustrations. Both have common responses that categorisations of the clients are seen by them as mere tools and really important in the process of helping them. This form of categorisation means to classify human beings according to stereotypes. B-58, for instance, categorises young clients as fit or unfit to take on an educational career. B-49 believed in the use and limitations related to denoting individuals as belonging to social categories, like juvenile gangs, in order to understand them better. This way of thinking may be linked to professional tendencies to analyse and categorise. The basic belief here rests upon two assumptions. First, that categorisation is a conscious strategy needed to provide relevant help to the clients—finding out what type of problems they have. Second, a profound belief that categorisations apply only when clarifying the client’s problem situation. When it comes to the client’s future potential, the street-level bureaucrat believes one is able to start from “scratch”. When it comes to *professional focus*, it was underlined at the Social Welfare

Office that in order to render effective help to the client related to programmes and actions, the professional social worker has to investigate the desires and capabilities of the client and not be overwhelmed by the client's problems and past failures. This is in conjunction with the ideas and suggestions presented by Antonovsky (2000), and the basic belief at the Social Welfare Office in "the Bay" is that if such professional knowledge is allowed to dominate the process of working with their clients, it may contribute to empowering the client.

The third element in this discourse is the belief that *coordinated* and *sequential* work with the clients may secure referrals that empower the client. This is related to clients referred from the Social Welfare Office to the Local Employment Office. The first step towards empowering referrals has to do with the *analysis* of the client's situation, and when he or she is ready to be referred to the Local Employment Office as a legitimate applicant for work. The challenge is related to clients with a motivational /and/or health problem and who are transferred from the Social Welfare Office—a challenge that was acknowledged at both agencies in "the Bay". B-58, at the Local Employment Office, stated something of relevance here, namely that clients with a major drug problem need to go through medical treatment before they are offered jobs. This line of argument makes it possible to theorise in terms of organisational actions. B-58 was suggesting the street-level bureaucracies engage in what might be referred to as a *rational* "sequential attention to goals" (cf. Cyert and March 1963), which here means to attend to different goals at different times within a logical frame: first enabling the client via treatment, and then finding him a job.

The second step is connected to the specific way of linking clients to work. At the Local Employment Office in "the Bay", they seem to act in terms resembling this, the principle of gradual progress. This means, for instance, that the client who has found a job does not have to work full time at once, but may increase the work hours gradually.

Comparing the discourses in this study

A final step concerning the presentation of the discourses in this chapter is to compare them and point out differences and similarities between them.

Identical, similar or conflicting discourses?

It is quite obvious that some of the discourses identified herein are similar or even identical when one compares them across respondent categories. This is very visible in “the Fjord” regarding discourses that are related to *single mothers*. Generally, the single mothers in that community were within the worthiness discourse. Then, they were judged by local people and the street-level bureaucrats in such a way that those discourses also were identified as representing the same content, and thus given identical titles. A probable reason behind this uniformity is the characteristics of embeddedness found in “the Fjord”; namely, that norms and perceptions across respondent categories in that community are related to the dominance of the fish industry.

In “the Bay”, the single mothers’ own discourse (on their own experiences) and local people’s judgment of them were also termed discourses of worthiness. In “the Bay”, the street-level bureaucracies were analysed as being “disembedded” and, therefore, the discourse related to the single mothers at the Social Security Office was given a different name. However, the discourses related to single mothers may be viewed as mutually strengthening each other, underlining that the client position as a single mother is normal and socially accepted. The figure below shows how the discourses related to single mothers are substantially identical.

Figure 7.2: *Discourses related to single mothers in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”*

	Single mothers experience discourses	Local peoples judgment discourses	Street-level bureaucracy implementation discourses
“The Fjord”	The worthiness discourse The interactional stigmatization discourse	The worthiness discourse	The worthiness discourse
“The Bay”	The worthiness discourse	The worthiness discourse	The universalism/rights-oriented discourse

Towards the *unemployed youth*, the laziness discourse found among local people in the two communities bears some principal resemblances. The laziness discourses among local people and the street-level bureaucrats in “the Fjord” are fairly identical, also due to the phenomenon of embeddedness. The content of the complexity discourse among local people in the two communities is also similar. However, the discourses in relation to unemployed youth are, as a whole, characterized by polarizations and conflicts. Two types of remarks are appropriate. Within the category of unemployed youth (in both communities), one finds contrasting discourses. In “the Fjord”, they are between those who experience nonvoluntariness and stigmatization and those who experience that the client position is characterised by worthiness. In “the Bay”, they are between those who experience stigmatization versus those who experience acceptance of the client position. The experiences of the unemployed youth are then, in total, more heterogenic than what is found among single mothers.

The second remark is related to local people and the street-level bureaucracies. In “the Fjord”, the unemployed youth are seen as generally lazy among local people and also by the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office; there is, then, a disapproval of the client position of the unemployed youth. At the Social Welfare Office, one finds the complexity discourse, which implies some manner of recognition of the problems unemployed youth represent, but one has, to a great extent, lost belief in the young and unemployed youth. In “the Bay”, the picture is different. Among local people the dominant discourse is the complexity discourse which represents recognition of the problems the unemployed youth may have, or at least that their situation is difficult to categorise. This means that a dominant trait among local people in “the Bay” is not to accuse the young and unemployed clients. Among the street-level bureaucrats in “the Bay”, one found the reflexive discourse which represents a critical diagnosis of how the street-level bureaucracies as organisations and professions work with the young and unemployed clients. In fact, this discourse acknowledges some of the criticism inherent in the young and unemployed clients’ own experience discourses: the street-level bureaucrats know that they are not always rendering effective services to these clients, and also see that they sometime make decisions that leads into stigmatization—for instance related to referrals of clients. The figure below point out the contrasting traits with regard to discourses related to unemployed youth.

Figure 7.3: Discourses related to unemployed youth in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”

	Unemployed youth`s experience discourses	Local peoples judgment discourses	Street-level bureaucracy implementation discourses
“The Fjord”	The nonvoluntarity/stigmatization discourse The Worthiness discourse	The laziness discourse The complexity discourse	The laziness discourse The complexity discourse
“The Bay”	The Acceptance discourse The Stigmatisation discourse <i>The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse (incorporated in the acceptance and stigmatization discourse)</i>	The complexity discourse The laziness discourse	The reflexive discourse: - The deviance contributing discourse - The empowerment contributing discourse

Dominant and minor discourses

The worthiness discourse related to single mothers (and especially in “the Fjord”) is to be viewed as a dominant discourse both within and across respondent categories. Among local people, and related to unemployed youth, the complexity discourse seems to be dominant in “the Bay” and minor in “the Fjord”. The opposite pattern seems to be the case concerning the laziness discourse. A suggested explanation behind these differences is connected to the relative strength of the working class and the middle class, which varies between “the Fjord” and “the Bay”. Among the unemployed youth, four different discourses were identified. Because being long-term unemployed, as well as having a relationship to the Social Welfare Office in both communities is to be seen as a “minority situation”, all of these discourses are to be perceived as minor ones. On the other hand, within the respondent category of unemployed youth there are clear-cut differences between the communities, as, for instance, the acceptance discourse and the low bureaucratic efficiency discourse were only found in “the Bay”.

Ambiguous and unambiguous discourses

Discourse theory points out the social construction of truth and knowledge (cf. chapter one). One possible interpretation of this is that discourses are supposed to be clear and unwavering concerning these matters. Comparing the different discourses identified in this work they, however, seem to be placed as either ambiguous or unambiguous. With regard to the question of knowledge and truth, the laziness discourse related to unemployed youth is clearly

unambiguous since this discourse provides sharp opinions on what young and unemployed clients are like. The most striking difference to the laziness discourse is the complexity discourse, for instance, as it was found among local people. This discourse appears to be ambiguous wherein doubt is a key aspect when it comes to the theme of knowledge and truth on the unemployed young clients; what they represent and why they are clients is viewed as uncertain and even enigmatic. Another example of an ambiguous discourse recognized in this study is the reflexive discourse at the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay”. In a “pro et con” manner, the respondents vacillated between portraying the implementation of the activation policy towards the young and unemployed clients as contributing to deviance versus empowerment.

Respondents and discourse: distinction or overlap?

The major finding is that the individual respondent can be placed in only one distinct discourse¹⁶⁷. There are, however, two exceptions to this pattern. As mentioned above, the reflexive discourse among the street-level bureaucrats in “the Bay” contains two sub-discourses. These respondents are all within both of those. The second exception is related to unemployed youth in “the Bay”. Those respondents, who were bearers of the low bureaucratic efficiency discourse, were also bearers of two other discourses: respectively, the acceptance discourse and the stigmatization discourse. What might it imply then, if respondents place themselves within more than one discourse? With reference to Neumann (2001) and Winther-Jørgensen and Phillips (2010), this can be seen as a discursive resource that serves the purpose of channelling resistance towards dominant discourses and/or expressing different types of identities¹⁶⁸. A few of the *young* and *unemployed clients* in “the Bay” placed themselves in both the low bureaucratic efficiency discourse and the stigmatization/acceptance discourse. Respondent B-10 was within the stigmatization discourse and the low bureaucratic efficiency discourse at the same time. Being within the former discourse highlighted the humiliating experience and the need to end his relationship to the Social Welfare Office. Being within the latter discourse may be interpreted as a discursive resource, as this client then need not blame himself for an enduring client-bureaucracy relationship: it is the bureaucracies that are inefficient with regard to qualifying him for work and then prolonging his relationship with the office. Another interpretation could be that being within the low bureaucratic efficiency discourse underlines the

¹⁶⁷ In chapter four this was the case related to *each* of the client categories.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. chapter one.

awkwardness of being within the stigmatization discourse. Respondent B-6 was within the acceptance discourse and the low bureaucratic efficiency discourse at the same time. Being within the former discourse is in itself a resource because he sees his relationship to the Social Welfare Office as normal, and being within the latter discourse at the least does not encourage him to feel negative or want to change, as the bureaucracies are believed to be inefficient organisations.

At the *street-level bureaucracies* in “the Bay”, and in relation to the young and unemployed clients, the respondents placed themselves within two sub-discourses the deviance contributing discourse and the empowerment contributing discourse. For these street-level bureaucrats, this might be seen as a discursive resource that serves the purpose of dealing with (as professionals and bureaucrats) criticism: by changing the conditions for professional and organisational performance one might serve the clients by securing real and effective material help and avoiding negative procedural consequences for them. Another striking effect of this dual discourse is that the responsibility for achieving the goals of the activation policy is strongly placed on the street-level bureaucracies as professionals, organisations and systems: the clients are but one part of a system.

Discourses and power

To frame a subject matter and define truth and knowledge on individuals and institutions attached to it is in itself to exert discursive power, and all of the respondents in this study have shown the ability to exercise such power. The formation of discursive power is said to be productive, meaning that it is not limited to the elite or a majority or those representing formal power in society (cf. Foucault 1980). This seems relevant to point out regarding the unemployed youth. In connection with them, it is quite obvious that alternative discourses to the dominant ones have been established to create defensiveness towards one’s own position. All of the discourses related to the young and unemployed clients’ own experiences may be viewed as defensive; one is pressured to become a client, one is experiencing stigmatization, one is blaming the bureaucracies of being ineffective in rendering help and terminating the client–bureaucracy relationship, and, finally, some are arguing that they deserve help or that a long-term client relationship to a bureaucracy is normal within one’s own subculture.

Alternative discourses, or at least discourses as defences, are also identifiable at the street-level bureaucracies. Three examples illustrate this: the Social Welfare Offices in both communities, but not the least in “the Fjord”, defend their organization and their young unemployed clientele by stressing that their clients are not lazy, but they have complex

problems that need be addressed. Furthermore, respondents at this office stress that they provide their clients with demands and they are not “soft” on them.

The two sides of the reflexive discourse at the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” represent a form of discursive defence: one might engage in producing deviance, but one has the ability to “switch” to producing empowerment, as long as the relevant diagnosis and sequence of decisions are made.

The three offices studied here represent national policy-oriented divides in terms of universalism versus particularism, and a high degree of discretion versus stricter rule following (cf. chapter five). This divide is used as discursive resources in two different ways. In “the Fjord”, bureaucrats at the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office use this difference in an attack on the Social Welfare Office, accusing those officials of supporting what they believe are young unemployed and lazy clients, by applying vague rules and a high degree of discretion. At the Social Welfare Office, on the other hand, the officials criticize the two other offices for labelling their clients as lazy. The point is that the national differences between these offices are woven together in “the Fjord” with the local work ethic and the phenomenon of embeddedness. At the offices in “the Bay”, the national policy divides are moreover reflected upon as unproblematic traits of the total organization of the welfare state, and integrated in the discourses characterized by reflexivity and disembeddedness—and where blaming of clients is absent.

A final remark concerning discourse and power is also related to the street-level bureaucracies. In chapter one, I argued that they are in the capacity both to exert discursive power in the way they frame the clients in terms of traits and capabilities and, in addition, exercise formal bureaucratic power in the practical steering of clients through actions. In the period of the activation policy, this is typically linked to referring them to work and/or educational programs. The question remains: what is the relationship between these two different forms of power in light of the empirical material presented in this work? Are these two forms of power in harmony or in contrast to each other as seen from the perspective of the respondents involved in a specific discourse on these clients?

This possible distinction is activated in relationship to the young and unemployed clients, as they are in a situation where the activation policy has to be put into operation. The impression from the empirical material is that the national activation policy is a strong institutional force that makes referrals of clients towards work and/or education the focus or a “standard operating procedure” when enforcing this policy.

In *“the Fjord”*, the street-level bureaucrats belonged either to the laziness discourse or the complexity discourse. For those representing the former discourse they will be inclined to believe that there is harmony between the discursive power and the bureaucratic power to link these clients to work. This is due to the belief that laziness is not really a hindrance to employment. For those who represent the complexity discourse, the situation is more ambiguous. In situations when creaming of clients takes place, the formal power seems not to be put into effect related to those “given up on”. Then, there are situations where there is a contradiction between defining clients as complex (having health and social problems as well as being blacklisted, which implies barriers towards performing work) and applying formal bureaucratic power related to referrals that turn out to be mechanical (contractual) and “countermoves”.

In *“the Bay”*, the street-level bureaucrats belonged to the reflexive discourse. The point of departure of this discourse is to recognize the young and unemployed clients as “complex”. These clients are characterized by having a variety of problems that need be acted upon in ways that strengthen their self-esteem as well as rendering them effective help. The question of the relationship between discursive and formal power is also related to referrals of clients between agencies and inside the bureaucratic organization (handing over clients to other officials). When the street-level bureaucracies function as described in the deviance contributing discourse, the application of formal power towards the clients is marked by contrast to the content of this sub-discourse. The situation is different when the street-level bureaucracies function as described in the empowerment contributing discourse; then there is harmony between discursive power and application of formal power.

Sometimes the application of formal power by the street-level bureaucracies studied here seem to be based upon “local premises” in the shape of “countermoves”, or when an individual assessment of the client is the basis for acting upon the client. On the other hand, it is also clear that the national policy emphasises the use of power also in situations where the implementation of the activation policy is done as a “standard operating procedure”, treating the client as a part of a “mass”. This observation can be linked to the Foucauldian perspective on power. Foucault (1980) stressed that power might come from everywhere, since it operates at micro levels of social relations. My modest comment with regard to this is that power then also might definitely come from the central and policy formulating level of the State.

Consequences for the young clients: the main findings

Looking back at the empirical material and the discourses, it is quite clear that the consequences for single mothers and unemployed youth appear to differ greatly. For the single mothers the consequences are mainly unproblematic, while they are more uncertain for the unemployed youth. In this brief section, I shall briefly address these differences.

Single mothers

For the single mothers there is no problem related to receiving *material help*. The financial rights they are entitled to at the Social Security Office are related to objective facts and easily documented; they just have to properly verify their marital status. A primary trait of the single mothers in both communities is that they are working or studying, and this implies that the “duty”-side of the activation policy is not fully activated; they are already living up to the goals and demands of the national activation policy. For those single mothers who, however, need to be mediated to work, this presents few problems as they have the capability to be integrated within the local labour market because they have few barriers to labour market entry.

The *procedural* aspects of being clients at the Social Security Office also present few problems or dilemmas for the single mothers. They believe they are deserving of help because they live up to the central norms in the community, cf. the worthiness discourse. There is, however, one nuance to this impression. Some of the single mothers in “the Fjord” found it troublesome to interact with the Social Security Office as this relationship made them feel like they were pleading for support, cf. the interactional stigmatisation discourse. Furthermore, in both communities the single mothers are surrounded by local people that accept their client position because the single mothers are believed to live up to the central norms of working or undertaking an educational career. In “the Fjord”, local people praise the single mothers for being willing to work for the fish industry, and in “the Bay”, for being willing to work generally. At the Social Security Office in “the Fjord”, the single mothers are seen as worthy clients because they adapt to the local labour market and are affiliated with this office. In “the Bay”, the single mothers at the Social Security Office are believed to be protected against stigmatisation and negative labelling because they are primarily clients with this office. On the other hand, the marginal economic position of single mothers in this affluent community might present a slight negative procedural consequence for them as the client position underlines their economic situation.

For the single mothers, the local context seems to be of little relevance in terms of problems and challenges: they are willing and able to be integrated in the local economy and support the work-related norms.

In relation to the national activation policy, the single mothers studied here illustrate conditions when the implementation of this policy is uncomplicated. The bio-policy, meaning to change persons on an individual basis, is normally not needed, as the single mothers already are working or are students. This means that aspects such as the use of formal power and contractualism is not used much towards the single mothers.

Unemployed youth

For the unemployed youth the question of receiving *material help* from the street-level bureaucracies appears to be more complicated and uncertain than for the single mothers. This seems to be related to traits of the clients, the functioning of the street-level bureaucracies and the structures of the local labour market. With regard to traits of the clients, those with minor and temporal problems related to unemployment, the chances of their receiving help are greater than for those marginalized and with complex problems. Those with complex problems may experience low prioritisation by the street-level bureaucrats because of tendencies of “creaming”, and referring¹⁶⁹ them to work is an uncertain act because some of the clients are unable to work and are unwanted as workers at the local companies—which means that the outcome of the mediation process is unsure. For unemployed youth in “the Fjord”, a special issue becomes evident related to the question of material help. The narrow spectrum of jobs in this community seems to exclude some clients from labour market entry. This is not necessarily related to persons who have complex problems, a bad reputation or are in processes of marginalization, but rather to individuals who just do not fit within the industrial structure of this community (cf. the experiences of F-4). The experience of F-4 is likely to be illustrative of a trend among young people who are reluctant to work in the fish industry in “the Fjord” (Jørgensen 2003a), and generally in north Norwegian fishery-dependent communities where the fish industry has been dominant (Jentoft 2001).

The uncertainties in connection to receiving help are also related to the functioning of the street-level bureaucracies. In “the Fjord”, the division between newcomers and veterans is a key concept: the newcomers tend to give long-term clients more chances to become integrated with the labour market, while the veterans are more hesitant concerning this. In “the Bay”, a key to understanding the possibilities for unemployed youth to receive material help is the

¹⁶⁹ Cf. also “The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse” in “the Bay”.

distinction between “the deviance contributing discourse” and “the empowerment contributing discourse”. If we look upon these discourses as extremities of a continuum the following is suggested. If the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” are able to function in accordance with the suggestions within the “the empowerment contributing discourse”, then these clients are likely to receive effective material help—and vice-versa. The potential that lies within functioning according to the “the empowerment contributing discourse” is that one then ensures clients are given new chances related to cognitive and professional focus and more rational referring practices.

When it comes to *procedural* consequences, these seem to be more varied and uncertain for the unemployed youth compared to the single mothers. This becomes evident when one looks at the experiences of the unemployed youth. Some of them report negative experiences related to being in a nonvoluntarily client position and also being stigmatised in the community, especially if one has a bureaucratic relationship with the Social Welfare Office. To have a relationship to this office also seems to foster psychological costs in the official-client interaction.

This experience seems to apply to clients that identify with norms that are typical in the communities. However, there are clients that think that their client position is more unproblematic because they are protected by an affiliation with subcultures or are strongly individualised, or believe that they deserve help from local street-level bureaucracies. Then, the negative judgments in the community with regard to their client position are somehow “overruled”.

The unemployed youth are judged by local people in two qualitatively different ways, which implies an uncertainty for them. These clients are judged by some local people as “lazy”, which means to stigmatise them in the shape of harsh accusations as being unwilling to work. This also implies that the real situation of the client may be overlooked. Other local people recognise that these clients do have real or complex problems, or that their whole situation appears to be enigmatic. The young and unemployed clients are surrounded by sympathy from these local people.

To be a client with the street-level bureaucracies is also more uncertain for the unemployed youth than for the single mothers. In “the Fjord”, these clients run the risk of being stigmatised as lazy or unable to change directions in life and are not given new chances in the implementation of the activation policy, but are still referred to the Local Employment Office as real applicants for work. In “the Bay”, however, the clients do not run the risk of being

labelled or stigmatised by the street-level bureaucracies as “lazy”. They do, on the other hand, run the risk of being labelled, stigmatised and experiencing psychological costs due to the way the bureaucracies and professionals function; because of irrational referral practices, humiliating turnover practices, deviance underlining bureaucratic categorisations and work arrangements, negative professional focus and the fact that the Social Welfare Office is perceived as stigmatised. Yet again, if the street-level bureaucracies in “the Bay” are able to function according to suggestions inherent in “the empowerment contributing discourse”, there may be other procedural consequences for these clients: if one is able to deliberately change officials for a specific client this may reduce the psychological costs if this ensures a better official-client relation. If one manages to have a professional focus that concentrates on the client’s abilities, this may reduce the psychological costs, as the client does not have to dwell on his problems and failures. Rational (coordinated and sequential) referral practices may also contribute to positive procedural consequences for young and unemployed clients, as these referrals have limited stigmatic potential.

The importance of the local context in relation to procedural consequences for the young and unemployed clients seems to be that it takes less to be defined as deviant in “the Fjord” than in “the Bay”, related to mediating the young and unemployed clients towards work. Local people in “the Fjord” seem to have a stronger footing in “the laziness” discourse than local people in “the Bay”. The complexity discourse in “the Bay” has a stronger footing among local people than in “the Fjord”. This is important because a dominant middle class in a community seems to prevent stigmatisation of unemployed youth. The street-level bureaucracies are of a different type—embedded in “the Fjord” and disembedded in “the Bay”, with their different sets of discourses and action repertoire.

When it comes to the national activation policy, the its implementation towards the unemployed youth seems more complicated and uncertain than for the single mothers. One obvious reason for this is that the activation policy (goals and demands) has to be activated, as these clients at the outset *are* unemployed or not in educational programs. One basic uncertainty is related to the bio-policy. It seems that the implementation of it not necessarily is done on an individualised basis by finding rational ways to integrate the unemployed youth with the labour market. Moreover, the use of power and the contractual understanding of the relationship between the local street-level bureaucracies and these clients seem to have irrational, unwanted and at the least uncertain effects.

Generalisations?

In chapter two, I addressed the question of generalization in relation to qualitative case studies. Some case studies are not surrounded by the goal of generalization (Stake 2005), but this is as it attempts to develop our understanding of street-level bureaucracy with a special focus on the consequences for clients. The type of generalizations possible are what is termed analytical generalizations, where one reasons on whether a specific context is transferable to similar situations (Stake 2005; Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). I also mentioned that one should be cautious when making these types of generalizations such that the context-bound knowledge related to the studied case(s) is not lost in simplifications (cf. Peattie 2001). In chapter two, I also mentioned that both researchers and readers of an academic text might perform such generalizations (cf. Stake 2005; Flyvbjerg 2006). Therefore, instead of being “obstinate” with regard to the question of analytical generalisations, I shall rather invite the reader to consider some elements that seem relevant for a discussion on transferability.

The clients

In chapter two, I stated that this study is a case of “client consequences”, since the problem statement is formulated in the following way “what are the consequences for young single mothers and unemployed youth of being clients at the local welfare bureaucracies?” Then, I also stated that the problem statement is the main focus in this work when discussing the possibilities for drawing analytical generalizations from the findings in this study. The main finding in this work is that there is a marked division between the single mothers and the unemployed youth when it comes to consequences of being in the client position related to material and procedural aspects¹⁷⁰. The question then is if this marked division is likely to be transferred to similar situations. What is a similar situation? To illuminate this question it seems relevant to relate this to *time* and *place*. In terms of time, it seems reasonable to believe that the findings may be transferred to a period in history when the activation policy is central and to be implemented by local street-level bureaucracies. In chapter one, I stated that in Norway this policy was introduced in the 1990s. The empirical material underpinning this work was gathered in the years 2000 to 2005. I think it is unwise, or at least risky, to suggest that the empirical findings in this work might be transferred to the situation after 2006, at least when it comes to the formal organization of the street-level bureaucracies. On 1 July 2006, the Local Employment Offices, the Social Security Offices and the Social Welfare Offices were

¹⁷⁰ Cf. The paragraph termed “Consequences for the young clients: the main findings” in this chapter.

merged¹⁷¹ in Norway due to a national reorganization process (Christensen, Fimreite and Læg Reid 2007). This reorganization may imply that the street-level bureaucracies, in some instance, might function in different ways than before the reorganization, and that clients (such as young single mothers and unemployed youth) may experience their position as clients differently after 2006. So, the question of transferability focuses on a time limit from approximately the 1990s until 2005, and the next question is related to place: are the findings likely to be transferable to other places (communities) than “the Fjord” and “the Bay” in Norway. One way of understanding the findings is that traits of the single mothers and unemployed youth are different. The single mothers in this study are working and/or undertaking an educational programme and have a primary bureaucratic relationship with the Social Security Office. The young and unemployed clients are, of course, unemployed and have bureaucratic relationships, by and large, with more than one office, as well as additional personal problems. Some of the literature presented in chapter one suggests that this difference may apply beyond the communities studied here. Ugreninov (2003) and Kleven and Lien (2007) showed that many of the young single mothers in Norway have a relationship to paid work and/or were undertaking educational programs. Kleven and Lien (2007) also demonstrated the single mother’s main bureaucracy contact as being with the Social Security Offices. Literature on long-term and marginalized clients presented in chapter one underlined that they often had difficulties entering the labour market. Slettebø (2000) argued that some of these clients were not necessarily able to perform ordinary forms of work, but that the implementation of the activation policy may pressure them towards the direction of work. Similar findings and viewpoints were identified in the writings of Rønsen and Skardhamar (2009), Hammer and Hyggen (2006) and Dahl and Lorentzen (2005). Some studies underlined that young and unemployed clients had barriers towards labour market entry due to personal problems such as drug-abuse, alcohol-abuse and mental problems (Schafft and Spjelkavik 2006; van der Wel et al. 2006; Lorentzen 2006). Finally, some studies underlined that among clients on social assistance at a minimum the potential to become integrated with the labour market varied between individuals within that category (Skilbrei 2000; Vannevjen 2001; Lødemel and Johannesen 2005). One way to interpret the above-referred literature is that the individual traits and problems of the young and unemployed clients identified in “the Fjord” and “the Bay” are not atypical.

¹⁷¹ The new employment and welfare organization (NAV).

Structures of the local context

This study has focused on the structures of “the Fjord” and “the Bay” (cf. chapter three) as frames that illuminates the consequences for single mothers and unemployed youth as clients at local welfare bureaucracies. The question may be whether these frames are similar to other communities in Norway. Both communities are relatively small in population, and that might present one limitation to transferability. A key word related to the structural distinctions between the two communities, developed in chapter five, was embeddedness (“the Fjord”) versus disembeddedness (“the Bay”). One aspect of embeddedness was to be very dependent on one particular and dominant industry in the implementation of the activation policy. This was clearly demonstrated in “the Fjord” where the dependency on the fish industry was strong. Is this situation transferable? In some communities (municipalities) in Norway, such dependency is so strong that Statistics Norway has classified these as one-sided industrial municipalities. Industrial one-sidedness is, however, not “enough”; one has to take into consideration in what type of region such a municipality is located. If it is located within a functional region (cf. Christaller 1966; Smith 1985), then the practical effect in terms of implementation of the activation policy might be altered, as the repertoire of jobs available are wider than within a specific municipality. I think it is reasonable to state that relatively few communities in Norway are as dependent upon one single industry as is found in “the Fjord”. A second aspect of embeddedness was the dominance of the working class related to dominant industries with regard to norms related to work and education. The transferability of this structural trait should also be related to one-sided industrial municipalities. The last aspect of embeddedness was that the dominance of a specific industry penetrated the local street-level bureaucracies through personnel transitions, lack of professionals and the presence of a local work ethic as an institutional basis (cf. also Lichtwarck and Clifford 1996). If this structural trait is transferable, I will suggest that it would apply in communities where the population is small, which also implies the bureaucracies to be small when measured in number of employees, where there is a dominant industry and in peripheral areas that traditionally have faced problems with regards to recruiting professional expertise (cf. Walle 1991; Hovik and Myrvold 2001; Lichtwarck and Clifford 1996; Haugland 2000).

Are the structures of disembeddedness, then, transferable? One aspect of disembeddedness was to not be dependent on one particular industry related to the implementation of the activation policy. This structural trait is probably transferable to communities that are characterised by a wide spectrum of jobs or one-sided industrial municipalities that are located in functional regions, and where the practical effect of one-sidedness is reduced as a

result. This was the situation in “the Bay”. A second trait of disembeddedness was the dominant position of the middle class, and this structural trait is most transferable to communities that produce such a situation through occupational structures. The last aspect of disembeddedness was street-level bureaucracies where personnel transition between industries and the bureaucracies was absent, and where the institutional basis was related to bureaucracies and professions. My suggestion is that this structural trait might be transferable to large- and middle-sized and relatively centrally located communities, which implies relatively large bureaucracies (in terms of number of officials) and where the recruitment of professional expertise is not a problem.

The discourses

I shall not repeat here the content of the discourses as they have been presented throughout this work, but rather engage in a brief discussion whether they may be related to broader culturally and historically rooted discourses. A difference regarding this is the distinction between “the Fjord” and “the Bay”, and embeddedness versus disembeddedness. In “the Fjord”, the tendency of embeddedness centers on perceiving single mothers and unemployed youth as either morally “bad” or “good”. This implies that across the respondent categories the discourses related to the young clients are connected to how they adapt to the local forms of work ethic, willpower and conduct of life.

In “the Bay”, characterised by a strong middle class and presence of professionals within the street-level bureaucracies the young clients—especially then the young and unemployed ones—are perceived as either “well” or, in particular, “sick”. This means that influences of higher education and scientific approaches inherent in professional training towards the young clients appears to be central. The situation for the young and unemployed clients is diagnosed and even the bureaucracies are diagnosed—by focusing to what extent they are designed and function in order to analyse the situation for and help these clients in effective ways. This distinction, which the discourses identified in this work underline, may seem to bear some resemblance to qualitative different and major discourses on social deviance presented by Conrad and Schneider (1992). They have identified a major shift in the perception of social deviance, reflected in the subtitle of their book “from *badness* to *sickness*”. In the foreword to the 1992-edition of this book, Gusfield illustrates how this shift in viewing deviance produces a different approach to social deviance: “The “sick” are neither criminal nor morally responsible for their “disease”. However, as sick people, they are both obligated and entitled to be helped. Defined as having medical problems, they are fit objects of treatment by medical

institutions. They can be cured and helped by technical knowledge” (Gusfield 1992: vii). I believe that the distinction inherent in the Gusfield quote illustrates major differences between the discourses in the two communities studied here.

Contribution to the street-level bureaucracy theory

In this final section I shall point out the study's contribution to the theoretical field of street-level bureaucracy. I will highlight elements that grew out of the analysis performed in this work.

A main focus on clients

As stated in chapter one, the typical street-level bureaucracy study focuses on the street-level bureaucrats as such, and how conditions of work (work load) produce coping strategies among street-level bureaucrats. The clients have been regarded as an "independent" variable, and have been of interest, first and foremost, as part of the picture regarding conditions of work and development of coping strategies. This study put the clients in focus: illuminating what the consequences are of being in the client position within a local context. It has been demonstrated that there exists a great difference between the single mothers and the unemployed youth concerning the question of material and procedural consequences.

Lipsky (1980) has suggested that clients may be understood as being in a nonvoluntary and stigmatized position as clients. This is related to formal and structural aspects of such positions. In this work, I have underlined the importance of giving the clients an independent voice, trying also to reveal *their* own experiences. A major contribution from this work related to the theme of procedural consequences is that clients exhibit a great variety with regards to nonvoluntariness and stigmatization. The single mothers seem not to experience their position as clients in that manner, for reasons that have been discussed throughout this work. For some of the young and unemployed clients the assumption that they are in a nonvoluntariness and stigmatized position seems better suited, but not for all of them. If the reading of street-level bureaucracy literature has created the impression that all clients find them as stigmatized and/or in an involuntary position, then this study suggests nuances to this picture.

The local context

In chapter one I stated that the context of street-level bureaucracies have been viewed as policies formulated at the state level, internal traits of specific street-level bureaucracies, and general norms in society (cf. Lipsky 1980, 1991; Thoren 2008; Evans 2010). This study has focused on a different type of context, namely the community as a frame for the analysis of

being in a client position. This study has “only” focused on two communities, but still found striking differences between them, which are relevant to the problem statement presented in chapter one. The frames with regard to the implementation of the activation policy are quite different: the spectrum of jobs is narrow in “the Fjord” and wide in “the Bay”. This also indicates that to live up to local work-related norms and be processed by the street-level bureaucracies means different things to the young clients in the two communities. The analysis of local people’s judgment of the clients showed that the middle class and the working class respondents tended to judge the clients (especially the young and unemployed ones) differently. It is an important point, then, that the uneven footing of the middle class and the working class in these two communities is to be considered an essential part of the local context. The analysis of the street-level bureaucracies in chapter five also underlined the importance of the local context. Nationally, these offices had the same names, functions related to the activation policy and laws pursuant to which to work. Nevertheless, the analysis of them resulted in the distinction between embedded and disembedded street-level bureaucracies. The concept of embeddedness focused institutional premises that had their basis in the local community, or more specifically the dominant industry, while disembeddedness focused on institutional premises that were rooted in the bureaucratic organization and the professional background of the officials. These differences also produced different types of discourses on the young clients that presented dissimilar types of consequences for them. Essential lessons from the analysis of the street-level bureaucracies in this work is the importance of looking underneath the surface and trying to detect how these offices function in practice—the implementation of the activation policy is distinct in the two communities. To take the local context into consideration implies the recognition that it sets forth specific frames for the clients, types of judgments by local people and implementation forms by the street-level bureaucracies. This study’s contribution to the street-level bureaucracy theory is, hopefully, that it has demonstrated the relevance of taking the local context into account when analyzing how policies are turned into practice.

Comparison

As pointed out in chapter one, Lipsky’s (1980) book on street-level bureaucracy suggested that his theory could apply to a wide range of organisations and professions, and therefore also clients. Writers such as Anon (1981), Moore (1987) and Evans (2010), underlined that the research and literature on street-level bureaucracy that followed Lipsky’s seminal contribution lacked a comparative element. The consequences of this were an exaggeration of

similarities and less focus on differences between such bureaucracies. As mentioned in chapter two, this study has provided deliberate and systematic comparisons that allowed finding similarities, distinctions and variations related to the phenomenon studied (cf. Tilly 1984). I have conducted comparisons between two different client categories, three different street-level bureaucracies and two different communities (structures), and working class and middle class respondents constituting local people. I will argue that without such a comparative design, I would not have been able to discover the distinctions and variations in how policy is turned into practice, and I believe that this work has demonstrated the usefulness of applying a comparative research design. I will argue the following; if one aspires at testing theory (discovering “black swans”), develop or nuance theory then one should perform consciously and systematically planned comparisons.

From policy to practice

In this study I have applied a model of analysis that contained four core elements (independent variables). This may be seen as a practical frame for the analysis as such. In this section, I suggest that this model may be my final contribution to our understanding of street-level bureaucracy. I propose the four elements as a “program” for how one may study the transformation of policy into practice. Below, I relate this to the activation policy, but believe that it—with some adaptations—also might be relevant for other fields of policy.

The first element to take into consideration is the *policy* as it is formulated at the state level and expressed in political documents. One should try to detect the official discourse on the target groups of the policy: assumptions on the importance of finding work and/or pursuing an educational career for all individuals within a target group category, as well as assumptions on abilities among individuals to live up to the content and aims of the policy. By the light of, for instance, the governmentality literature (cf. chapter one), one should also try to illuminate possible dilemmas connected to the state’s steering of individuals: goals of individualized bio-policy versus contractualism, as well as the possible contradiction between empowering the clients on their own premises and at the same time endowing the implementing agencies of the state with the ability to steer and pressure clients through mechanisms of power. However, and as underlined by Gane and Johnstone (1993), O’Malley et al. (1997), Dean (2002) and Villadsen (2002), our analysis should not dwell on the “mentality of rule” at the state level. Moreover, we should “step down” and perform a specific study of how policy is taking shape in practice.

The second element is suggested to be then concentrated on examining *the local context*: what are the characteristics of the local labour market? Is the community located in a functional region or not? What might be identified as local norms related to work, educational ambitions and conduct of life? What does the community look like in terms of social classes and their relative dominance and respective weakness? What kind of discourses on clients is likely to be produced and dominant according to industrial, regional and class structures?

The third element is to examine the characteristic of local policy implementing *street-level bureaucracies*. A central question to ask here is if there is a distinction between universalistic (rights-oriented) and particularistic (means-testing and high degree of discretion) policies located at different agencies. Furthermore, to investigate the possible importance of size, number of officials and degree of bureaucratization. Degree of professionalization is also an important dimension to look at, cf. the concepts of embeddedness and disembeddedness. In addition, one should also examine how coping strategies, such as creaming, categorisations, stigmatization, rubber stamping, referrals and psychological costs, affects the implementation towards clients. As part of this, one should also examine if the implementation is somehow shaped by the local context and expressed through certain discourses.

The fourth element is to examine *client traits* by giving the clients an independent voice. Relevant questions to illuminate will be are they at work/studying and in addition to being clients? Or, are they long-term unemployed, and possibly have additional problems making it difficult to become integrated with the local labour market? Which welfare bureaucracy are they associated with and why? What does their local social network look like, and what kind of norms do they support in relation to work, education and association with welfare bureaucracies? Are they passive/hesitating recipients of the dominant local norms or do they construct their own identity as clients by placing themselves in alternative and protective discourses?

My final suggestion is this: if one includes these four elements in a study of how policy is turned into practice, I propose that the chances are good for achieving a realistic examination of material and procedural consequences of being in a client position with local welfare bureaucracies.

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APPENDICES

Appendices to chapter two

Appendix 2.1: List of themes in the pilot-interviews in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”

The following themes were covered:

- Social problems among youth
- The youth culture
- The local labour market
- Education among youth
- Relationships between the main industries and the local school
- Movement patterns among youth
- Characteristics of the main industries
- The recruitment of manpower to the main industries

Appendix 2.2: The interview guide used in the 2000-2001 study

The following themes and questions were covered:

1. To live in the community
 - a. Well-being
 - b. Social background/parents education – occupation
 - c. Close friends that have moved away
 - d. Plans on staying or leaving the community
2. Education
 - a. Own education (so far)
 - b. Relations to the local school
 - c. Class environment, mobbing, mischief
 - d. Support from parents – discussions on further education
 - e. Grades/achievement
 - f. What close classmates have done in relation to education
 - g. Plans for further education
3. Organised activities
 - a. What is found in the community?
 - b. Inclusive – exclusive
 - c. Discipline - demands on achievement
 - d. When one started/stopped participate?
 - e. Organised activities and social networks
4. *The introduction of the vignettes – single mothers and unemployed youth (filling out the form)*
5. Discussions on single mothers:
 - a. Attitudes towards them in the community
 - b. Do you know some young single mothers in the same situation as presented in the vignette?
 - c. Your own attitudes/judgments
 - d. Do you know anything about the situation for young single mothers locally?
 - e. What do you think the single mothers should do? /What should the society do?
 - f. Do you know anything about the attitudes in the family and/or close friends towards young single mothers, locally?
 - g. Support and help from local authorities
 - h. Exclusion/denunciation
 - i. Other groups in the community recognized as surrounded by exclusion/denunciation
 - j. Attitudes towards single mothers that are strait/at work
 - k. Attitudes towards single mothers out of work/“rough” lifestyle
 - l. Attitudes towards single mothers on social assistance
6. Unemployed youth:
 - a. Attitudes towards youth who does not want to work
 - b. Do you know some unemployed youth in the same situation as presented in the vignette?
 - c. What do you think about getting into such a position?
 - d. Do you know anything about the situation for unemployed youth locally?
 - e. What do you think the unemployed youth should do? /What should the society do?
 - f. What kind of help have they received and by whom?
 - g. Do you know anything about the attitudes in the family and/or close friends towards unemployed youth, locally?
 - h. Do you know anything about attitudes at local authorities towards unemployed youth – support/denunciation/rejection?
 - i. (Summing up discussion on single mothers and unemployed youth):

- i. If there is any kind of “gossip” on persons in the community – which ones? (single mothers, drug-addicts, young and long-term unemployed, persons on social assistance)
- 7. Work and income
 - a. Main type of work the last years
 - b. Work experience during adolescence
 - c. Attitudes towards working in the main industries
 - d. Own work preferences compared to local job possibilities
 - e. What is considered to be a “good job”?
 - f. Plight for self-support
 - g. Plight to accept boredom, risk and drudgery
 - h. Periods with unemployment, unemployment benefit, disability pension, social assistance
- 8. Organized Leisure time
 - a. What does youth engage in locally?
 - b. Where do they meet?
 - c. About the youth club
 - d. Relationship between “younger and elder” youth
- 9. On drugs
 - a. How easy is it to get hold of drugs locally?
 - b. Own smoking habits
 - c. Own alcohol and drug habits
 - d. When and why did one start?
 - e. General descriptions on drug- and partying cultures, locally
 - f. Parents attitudes towards their children’s drug behavior
- 10. On friends
 - a. Social network while attending compulsory school – description
 - b. Who have you lost contact with?
 - i. Where are they?
 - ii. What are they doing?
 - c. Someone who is on the downward path
 - i. Why?
 - ii. Have you contact with them now?
 - iii. Where are they?
 - iv. What are they doing now?
 - d. Describe your present network
- 11. Experiences as clients at the Social Security Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Welfare Office
 - a. How is one looked upon locally if one has contact with these offices?
 - i. Categorized
 - b. Is it possible to hide from local people that one has relations to these offices?
 - i. If yes: how
 - c. What are your own attitudes towards having contact with these offices?
 - i. If this is difficult: what can you do about it?
 - d. Do you know anyone in a similar situation as yourself who has not sought help at these offices?
 - i. If yes: what do you think may be possible reasons for it?
 - e. Which of the three offices do you have contact with?
 - f. What kind of services at these offices did you have knowledge on beforehand?
 - g. What were your attitudes beforehand with regard to these offices?
 - i. Those who work there
 - ii. The services they render
 - iii. The attitudes among local people regarding these offices
 - iv. Localities
 - 1. Visible entering the offices – secrecy-exposure

2. Other people having errands there

- h. Did you have to argue much to get support from the office(s)?
- i. What kind of attitudes were you met with from the officials?
 - i. Towards yourself
 - ii. Regarding your family background
 - iii. The culture you “belong” to
- j. How did you experience to communicate with the officials?
 - i. Language barriers
 - ii. Exposure of own situation
 - iii. Passive – active in the communication
- k. Do you have any opinion on what the officials at these offices think about the services they render?

Appendix 2.3: The vignettes used during the interviews in the 2000-2001 study

TERJE – AN UNEMPLOYED YOUTH, APPROXIMATELY 20 YEARS OLD

Terje grew up in the community. His father is on disability benefit, has for a long time had an alcohol problem and only occasionally been employed. The mother is staying at home. Terje got early in trouble with teachers and pupils and shirked a lot, especially at the secondary modern school. He did not enjoy the school, left it after the ninth grade and would rather earn money in the industry. He got the opportunity to try *the fish industry/the ship building industry*, but he did not do well there. He early got involved with the local drug culture, something which made him unstable as a worker. He is living with his parents and two younger siblings. During periods with little income from work, he has received social assistance from the Social Welfare Office. It has been difficult for him to get a chance at the local employers. He now believes that he cannot stand the work at *the fish industry/the ship building industry*. He has therefore made contact with the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office in order to get help to find other types of work.

Assertions to the vignette:

1. It is reasonable to criticise Terje for the problems he has gotten into

Completely agree

Completely disagree

2. The companies ought to do a lot in the effort of giving people like Terje a job offer

Completely agree

Completely disagree

3. Public authorities like the Social Welfare Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office must do whatever they can in order to help people like Terje

Completely agree

Completely disagree

4. Terje is himself responsible for sorting out his problems.

Completely agree

Completely disagree

5. It is good if the Local Employment Office in cooperation with the Social Security Office can use resources to offer Terje rehabilitation in order to find more suitable work.

Completely agree

Completely disagree

TORIL – A SINGLE MOTHER, APPROXIMATELY 20 YEARS OLD

Toril grew up in the community, but when her parents were separated when she was attending the secondary modern school, she for a shorter period of time lived with her father in the south, before she returned. Her mother lives in the community. Toril was little motivated for school work, and was in conflict with teachers and pupils, especially in the secondary modern school. She shirked a lot during the ninth grade, and could not stand the thought of more school work. She tried the *fish industry/the ship building industry*, but was unstable and did not enjoy working there. She got into a drug-culture. She became pregnant at got a baby when she was 17 years old. The years after she gave birth she mostly stayed at home with the child, but she also has contact with the drug-culture. She has had a couple of partners during short periods of time, but she is at the moment living alone in a basement apartment which she rents. She is receiving transitory support from the Social Security Office preliminary for three years after her child was born. She recognises at the moment that it may be an advantage to take some more education, and has mentioned at the Social Security Office that she perhaps needs support concerning this.

Assertions to the vignette:

1. It is reasonable to criticise Toril for the problems she has gotten into

Completely agree

Completely disagree

2. The companies ought to do a lot in the effort of giving people like Toril a job offer

Completely agree

Completely disagree

3. Public authorities like the Social Welfare Office, the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office must do whatever they can in order to help people like Toril

Completely agree

Completely disagree

4. Toril is herself responsible for sorting out her problems.

Completely agree

Completely disagree

5. It is good if the Social Security Office and the Social Welfare Office can offer Toril financial support to enable her to study further (educational support, housing support, support for taking care of the child etc.)

Completely agree

Completely disagree

Appendix 2.4: The interview guide used in the 2005 study

Interview guide for officials at the Local Employment Office, the Social Welfare Office and the Social Security Office in “the Fjord” and “the Bay”

Introductory questions/themes

The professional and work related background of the respondent.

The functions of the respondent towards single mothers/un-employed youth as part of the work at the office.

Have there been any important changes in the community since the years of 2000 – 2001?

Have there been any important changes at your office since the years of 2000 – 2001?

Have there been any important changes between the offices in this community (the Social Welfare Office, the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office) since the years of 2000 – 2001?

Main questions

- 1. What kind of information do the young users have to give to the office on themselves?**

In what way do the community\ local conditions have an impact on this matter?

- 2. Do you have any opinion with regard to properties concerning the young users?**

In what way do the community\ local conditions have an impact on this matter?

- 3. Do you have any expectations towards the young users with regard to what they ought to do?**

In what way do the community\ local conditions have an impact on this matter?

- 4. Can you say something on how it specifically is worked with the young users?**

In what way do the community\ local conditions have an impact on this matter?

- 5. Can you say something concerning the interaction between you\ the office and the young users?**

In what way do the community\ local conditions have an impact on this matter?

- 6. What are important differences between the Local Employment Office, the Social Welfare Office and the Social Security Office?**

In what way do the community\ local conditions have an impact on this matter?

- 7. Anything you want to add?**

Appendices to chapter four

The appendices to chapter four document similar judgments of clients as those quoted in the chapter, and are organised by community, client category and type of discourse.

“The Fjord”

The judgment of single mothers – the worthiness discourse

Appendix 4.1: The respondents quoted below had similar judgments as respondents F-18 (*Young worker*), F-25 (*Middle aged worker*) and F-33 (*Middle class*):

It has been very common with lone mothers here all the time. It is normal. If you are a lone mother, then everyone knows that the father has abandoned her. So they receive support more than censure. You must get the money you can, when you are looking after a small child (Respondent F-13 – *Young worker*).

I don't know how many lone mothers there are in “the Fjord”. To become a lone mother is something which may happen to most of us. It is a bit silly. It is not an ideal situation to get into. It has become more and more usual to be a lone mother. We have some of them working here at the fish factory. We start at seven o'clock in the morning, with the kindergarten. That is for lone parents as well as other parents. It is no problem. Some are working, some are not and some are studying (Respondent F-14 – *Young worker*).

Here it is quite OK. Many have had a baby early in life. There is no prejudice towards single parents here, and I think that is great. (Respondent F-15 – *Young worker*)

I was a single mother when I was young, and I got myself an education. I think being a single mother is accepted in “the Fjord”; it is common. We do not have a pietistic culture which denounces you. You do not get negative comments from Christian associations if you are a single mother here. Single mothers have good support in this community. Some may say that you are fairly well off when receiving public support, but as a rule this is seen as OK (Respondent F-23 - *Middle aged worker*).

This (single motherhood) is accepted here. They are *struggling* like everyone else, and they are *employed*. They have a tougher time than others (Respondent F-26 - *Middle aged worker*).

I am an immigrant to “the Fjord” so I don't know so much about how this traditionally has been here. But I don't think there are any negative attitudes to young single mothers here. Perhaps such attitudes are more likely to be found other places in this country. (Respondent F- 27- *Middle-aged worker*).

I don't see any negative moral attitudes towards single mothers here in “the Fjord”. I think the general attitude is that they deserve help. If a single mothers is in such a situation I don't think there is anything wrong helping her – for instance by helping her with schooling. (Respondent F-28 – *Middle-aged worker*).

I believe it is so common here in “the Fjord” to be a single mother that no one really pays much attention to that. I don’t think single mothers are looked down on here; at least I have not heard anything like that. I know some young single mothers that got a child very early, and everything is OK with them: they manage both to study and to work. I don’t know so much about the public help they receive, but I think they should help – this is something that may happen to all (Respondent F-29 – *Middle-aged worker*).

I know many single mothers who manage well, and they do not have a drug problem. They have taken more education when the children became older. The last 20-30 years it has not been a disgrace to be a single mother; it is accepted. This has been a trait ever since this place was established. Both grandparents and grand grandparents have been in a similar situation. Religion has not a solid footing here. I think most people here believe it is OK to be at home with a child for some time, while receiving security benefit. But you must not do it forever! When you are offered a job and have a child, and access to a kindergarten, then it is no problem to have a job - or to study. The single mothers in “the Fjord” have always been working. Very few of them have been at home until their child reached the age of 10 (Respondent F-32 - *Middle class*).

I don’t know how common it is to be a single mother in “the Fjord”, but this is anyway not a big issue here. I don’t believe this is something the single mothers have planned to avoid working. I don’t see that there is much moral denunciation towards the single mothers here. (Respondent F-35 – *Middle class*).

Single motherhood is accepted here. I don’t recognise that anyone talks negatively about it (Respondent F-37 – *Middle class*).

Appendix 4.2: *The respondents within this discourse also stated the conditionality for single mothers of being judged as worthy.* The respondents quoted below stated similar judgments as respondent F-19 (*young worker*):

I am a bit critical towards the public support of single mothers and others. I think it is too easy to receive money for the support of your situation. I think they are asked too few questions (i.e.: by the officials) (Respondent F-16 – *Young worker*).

It is quite normal in “the Fjord” to be a single mother and also young. But it is something else if you are abusing drugs, then people will probably gossip about you. (Respondent F-17 – *Young worker*).

I think that there are some young single mothers here in “the Fjord”, but I don’t think that they are looked down on as long as one is looking after ones baby and lives a normal life. A single mother here will probably be looked down on if she abuse drugs (Respondent F-20 – *Young worker*).

There are many single mothers here in “the Fjord”, but they are not looked down on: what has happened has happened! I think it is important that they get themselves an education and a steady job. I don’t know any single mother here that is into abusing drugs, but if she did it would not be very “smart” (Respondent F-21 – *Young worker*).

Either you get yourself an education or you get pregnant. It has been usual for years that young girls get pregnant and then they either work in the fish industry afterwards, or they leave the community to get an education. They would not be able to live a life at all if they did not get the financial support. Maybe it is not right that a very young girl gets a baby so early in life, but it is not the baby's fault. So the baby must have a secure environment, so then it is reasonable to give financial support – it is rather a question of how much one ought to receive (Respondent F-18 – *Young worker*).

There are a lot of single mothers here, I don't know the exact figures, but there are many in "the Fjord". I do not see it as a disadvantage to get pregnant just because you are very young. It depends on the situation and the kind of public support which is there for you. I think the network by and large is good for these girls here. I know a single mother who was into the abuse of drugs, and she was really on the downward path. She was able to manage because of the support she received from her family and friends. Today she is doing all right, and is contemplating going back to school. I think people have a variety of opinions on those receiving social security. Some may think that you are having a grand life because of that. I think it is difficult to have a clear-cut opinion on this issue. It depends upon the reasons for getting in that position. *You should not only get support from the state, you have to put in an effort yourself, too* (Respondent F-24 - *Middle aged worker*).

Two categories exist (of single mothers). Some try to exploit... There are job opportunities here, get help to find place for your child in a kindergarten. So the possibility to perform work exists for the single mothers. So you have the category that uses this opportunity. Often they have a certain social network: either the family or other single mothers. It is quite visible; you may observe them together. On Saturdays you can see them together at the Café. Then you have the other category, which does not handle the situation. They have gotten into a situation where they are dependent upon social security and support from the state. For some of them *this seems to be a chosen* situation; they have found out about the economic possibilities. So this is also a category. But a major part of the single mothers in "the Fjord" are at work (Respondent F-34 – *middle class*).

I know a single mother (in "the Fjord"), the same age as my daughter, and she was on the downward path (abusing drugs), unfortunately. She gave birth to a son, then she ran away and her parents had to look after the child. So it was not a good situation. *If you (i.e.: a single mother) are abusing drugs; then it is something else. Then there is something wrong there.* (...) Maybe someone says that when you get a baby, then you receive a lot of public support. Then you don't need to work. In a way that is maybe true, because many of those who receive the allowance they are entitled to, do not work. But I think it pays to work (Respondent F-31 – *middle aged worker*).

I believe it is accepted to be a single mother in "the Fjord", and I don't recognize any moral denunciation towards them among the locals that I know personally. The only concern is that they should complete their schooling. It is a bit awkward to get pregnant the last year of the comprehensive school if that means that they destroy their future. More this than moral denunciation. I know some single mothers here that got a child early, but they have taken more education afterwards. (Respondent F-36 – *Middle class*).

The judgment of unemployed youth – the laziness discourse

Appendix 4.3: The respondents quoted below had the same type of judgments as respondent F-13 (*Young worker*):

Not all of them deserve to get on rehabilitation. That may be the attitude among people around here. You know of persons who anyway are able to work for 24 hours. That is not highly appreciated. You may use the Local Employment Office, but if you say that you are sent by the office – then it means that the point is not to lose your allowance. I do not want to have people here who really do not want to work. I think the users of the Social Welfare Office accept using it. Those who are clients there by and large stick together, I think. Then you have those who do not use it, who believe that you should rather be working (Respondent F-14 – *Young worker*).

There are many of those that make up problems in order to get *so called* re-education. You have these characters who do *not endure* to work for the money: they travel to the other end of Norway and then they get the home journey paid for since the Social Security Office down there has nothing to do with them. There are too few demands towards them by the public offices. It is perhaps wrong to say they should starve, but if they get hungry they will start working. I am not the only one around here with such attitudes towards them. We should not support much those who do not give a damned (Respondent F-16 – *Young worker*).

There are a lot of young persons in “the Fjord” who *cannot face working*. *That provokes me a lot*. That is people who go to the Social Welfare Office. They get a flat, the equipment they need and a job arranged by the office. Then they work for two weeks, and then they cannot stand it. Then they go to the Social Welfare Office again. I look down on them; I have to admit that. I think it is ok to give them a chance, but when they are only exploiting the system. It is ok when you are seventeen and a bit helpless and your parents are alcoholics, but when you get older. I have not heard that the welfare bureaucracies are helping them, that is maybe because it is so easy to get money from them (Respondent F-19 – *Young worker*).

To work for the fish industry is a good job if you want to earn money really fast. Then the question is if you want to work there all the time. But if they do not choose the fish industry – if no one chooses it then everything goes down. The fish industry is the foundation here. Those who do not want to work at the fish industry and are idle: that I think is *laziness*. You cannot just go around doing nothing. There is no future in that; you must try something. I think unemployed youth here are met with negative attitudes: you have to work! You cannot just sit on your ass and demand that the Social Security Office and the Social Welfare Office shall pay (Respondent F-20 – *Young worker*).

I don't like that at all, the way I see it. That I am paying my tax and the money goes to the guys who are not interested in working. I don't like that. They are *Råttstokka*. No, I don't like such people who are not interested in working. They are not doing anything at all; they are just drifting. They cannot face school or anything. You have to help them, but not for the rest of their life. They have to start working with something. They should be doing something for the money they receive (Respondent F-21 – *young worker*).

Appendix 4.4: The respondents below had same type of judgments as respondent F-26 (*middle-aged worker*):

Are there many using the services of the Social Welfare Office?¹⁷² *I don't know anyone who goes there. Single mothers went there before. This is to misuse the welfare system; you should rather find yourself a job.* It is generally accepted in “the Fjord” being on rehabilitation. If you get a back injury, then it is fully accepted. It is sometimes commented upon if people believe you receive such help without really needing it. Most of those without a job seek help in finding work at the Local Welfare Office; and I myself have been registered there and got a job through the office. My impression is that most of them want to work (Respondent F-23 – *Middle-aged worker*).

I don't think people in “the Fjord” want to seek help at the Social Welfare Office. That is not the first instance they go to for help. That's the way I feel about it, and that's how others comment upon it as well. We are not so afraid because of the gossip; it has more to do with pride - *the pride towards ourselves*. It has happened that some have sought help there during lay-offs in the fish industry. I don't think there are that many young persons that seek help at the Social Welfare Office. Some, which are part of the drug culture, are clients there. They live in their own culture, and they probably have a different attitude towards this issue. (...) When we need workers in the fish industry, and receive the record from the Local Employment Office, you find the same names as you did six months earlier. *This is a small society, so everyone knows each other: those on that list do not want a job.* It is the “veterans” that are on that list. When there is a stop in the production in the fish industry, a different type of persons is on that list. That's a different matter (F-24 – *Middle-aged worker*).

If social security is an arrangement for those who will not do anything – who only are fooling around and just receiving monetary support: Youth, who do not want to do anything, will be looked down on here (Respondent F-26 – *Middle aged worker*).

I think it is too easy today, to go to the Social Welfare Office. They go there, it is not usual. I could never have done that. It is good if you are able to help them get a job or an education, but *just to receive financial support...* I think there are too many of those on assistance who have never been working. I know. And, frankly, that irritates me! (Respondent F-28 – *Middle aged worker*).

I think they should work – send them into work! (Respondent F-30 – *Middle-aged worker*).

Appendix 4.5: The respondents below had same type of judgment as respondent F-35 (*Middle class*):

To use the Social Welfare Office is commented upon by people in “the Fjord”. It depends upon the background for it. If it is because of lack of work, and *you have done all that you are able to do to get work*, then you may seek help at the Social Welfare Office. I think that is fully accepted here. But if you at the same time reveal that you can afford going to the PUB a couple of nights during the week, then it is not so accepted. In this place everyone notices what happens. I guess some of the youth in this community seek help at the Social Welfare Office, but in “the Fjord” there is a stabile situation concerning work

¹⁷² The respondent formulates this question.

opportunities. I think some people have a real need to seek help at the office. I was there once myself, while I was laid off from the fish industry. I got some help there while I was waiting for my financial support from the Local Employment Office. I know *some* people misuse the Social Welfare Office. Then you have the alcoholised wrecks, but they are in a culture of their own. Then there are some younger persons who have misused their chances as workers, they have been unstable – have not shown up at work. (...) When you receive social security benefit, it all depends upon yourself and what you do. If you are sick then you of course deserve it. If you are sick, then it is accepted. It will be commented upon if people doubt that you are really sick. This is a small place, so we know what your work has been like. If you are on sick leave for one year because of a bad back, and at the same time are able to go hunting, then people can't figure it out. (...) I think it is OK to get a job through the Local Employment Office. I have myself got a lot of work through them. *The companies receive a list from the office, and then they pick the ones they want to give a job.* When workers are laid off in the fish industry, then they have to go to the Local Employment Office, to deliver their application for unemployment benefit and all that stuff (Respondent F-27 – *Middle aged worker*).

If you have shown willingness to work, then it is accepted to receive social security benefit. (...) I don't think the (young) clients at the Social Welfare Office have a high social status in this community. They really know that they are able to work, but have a way of life, which means that they do not get a job. That is not all that popular. People know that they have tried to work at the different companies (the fish industry), and they have not shown up at work. *By and large they have been lazy.* I don't believe they are socially excluded in this community. No one has prejudice against greeting them when you meet in the street, but you ask the question "why?" I myself am working all day long, and they have the same type of car and so on. Some of the clients form their own culture, while others have more contact with the rest of the population in "the Fjord". Some young persons (unemployed) stay at home with their parents. The parents are really too proud; you shall not go to the Social Welfare Office. "You shall rather receive money from us instead" (Respondent F-32 – *Middle class*).

The judgment of unemployed youth – The Complexity discourse

Appendix 4.6: The respondents below had similar judgments as respondent F-17 (*Young worker*):

Maybe they have gotten into that position because they have been easily *influenced* by the drug culture. But I am not sure. Some years ago there was an isolated drug culture here. Everyone knew about it. They were looked down on and all that stuff. Then they moved to Oslo, because that was easier. Now there is drug abuse all over. It is not easy to point them out (Respondent F-18 – *Young worker*).

I used to know many of those who did not work and were in the *drug culture*. Many of my best friends are now on the downward path. I knew the entire culture, and it expanded. I grew up with the worst *drug dealers*. They always greet me, but I never return the greeting. I never look them straight in the eye (Respondent F-22 - *Young worker*).

That is something which is looked down on here. There is a lot of attention towards those who abuse alcohol. That is the losers. But people ought to see that as an *illness*. Many get that kind of problems *when* they are *young*. Those I know of are such who do

not want to work: Most of them that is, *not all of them*. Since this is a small community I think it is a fairly high percentage that are clients with the Social Welfare Office. We have to do something. I believe that those people (i.e. the young clients) care about condemning attitudes from others (Respondent F-25 – *Middle-aged worker*).

Appendix 4.7: The respondents below had similar judgments as respondent F-36 (*Middle class*):

The situation of the young and unemployed is awkward. You wonder: could something have been done in *the past* to avoid such a situation? It is always difficult to tell. As a rule this is something, which starts in the school. *It is a loser's career*. Most of them wind up on the outside of society, but I also know persons who have managed to *change directions in life*. When you meet them today you ask is it really you? Those who have changed have been away from “the Fjord” for a while. My impression is that they have been able to rethink their situation, then. Not all are that mature when they are 20. Some of those who go away may enter a bad culture, and they may experience a bad development. (...) If you become dependent upon social assistance, and have an additional problem with alcohol, then you are among the lowest in this community. Some of the clients form their own culture. When there are temporary production stops in the fish industry, there is example of workers seeking help at the Social Welfare Office. But this is more accepted. As a rule these are persons who need help for a shorter period of time, and then get back to work and are able to manage on their own. People almost see it as embarrassing if their neighbour becomes a client, if he has been working all the time. Then it means that something is wrong. Elder and younger persons see it as embarrassing to be on social assistance. They are expected to manage on their own, and avoid winding up at the Social Welfare Office. But I also recognise young persons who have dropped out of school, and not got a footing in the local industries. They see it as OK to receive social assistance. I think it has something to do with the self-image. (...) *I have heard a couple of times that persons figuring on the record of the Local Employment Office are unfit to work. So that's why they are on that list*. It is not necessary “the veterans” either. I know the fish industry do not pick persons from that list, they rather contact persons they consider fit for the work (Respondent F-33 – *middle class*).

I think they somewhere in time have had a bad development; come on the downward path. Some of these eventually become integrated into work, while others do not. Some of them have a drug-problem and earn money as drug dealers. ... But I think we should demand more of them, because we have been too easy on them. We should *demand* of them that they *perform* work, or engage in activities *which look like work* (Respondent F-34 – *Middle class*).

Appendix 4.8: The respondents quoted below had similar judgments as respondent 29 (*middle-aged worker*):

I don't know many that are young and unemployed. I know of one example, a young girl who has had it a bit easy. She lived with her parents, and was supported by the Social Welfare Office. She tried working, but it did not work out for her. Her parents always let her have her way with things. They gave her money and... I don't really know (i.e.: about anyone else). *I know the youth here just a little - what they are doing. I have my own friends* (Respondent F-15 – *Young worker*).

I don't know if young men get on rehabilitation, but some drop out of work – *I believe*. Maybe they are quite young; *I don't know*. I don't know if they are looked down on in

“the Fjord”. I believe some call them poor creatures. I believe that they might become excluded from the working life in “the Fjord”, but I also *believe* they might get a second chance. ... *I don't know anything* concerning how the local welfare bureaucracies work with unemployed youth in this community (Respondent F-37 *Middle class*).

“The Bay”

The judgment of the single mothers – the Worthiness discourse

Appendix 4.9: The quotes below represent similar judgments as with respondent B-21 (*Young worker*):

I think that there maybe are more liberal attitudes towards single mothers here *now* than *before*. They are more accepted by people since there is more of it. When there is little of a thing then it is not accepted, but when there is much of a thing then it is more accepted because it seems more normal (Respondent B-22¹⁷³ - *Young worker*)

I don't have any special attitudes towards single mothers receiving social security benefit. There is little talk of young single mothers in “the Bay” (Respondent B-26 – *Young worker*).

(Single motherhood) is not seen as something negative here. I think it really has *become* totally *accepted*. I think it probably was worse in the past. Then it was more common to have a husband and the core family and all that. The single mothers receive more support than before, and they do not distinguish themselves that much from others (Respondent B-27 – *Young worker*).

I don't think single mothers are looked down on *today* (when they receive support from the Social Security Office). I don't think that they feel looked down on themselves either (Respondent B-28 – *Middle-aged worker*).

Single mothers have become normal now. I don't believe people here looks down on them; I think that was different 20 years ago. As long as she is taking care of kids then I think no one looks down on her for not being at work, because then she has a task. But of course if she gets children with many different genitors then.... (Respondent B-33 – *Middle aged worker*).

I guess there are different opinions on single mothers here, but I don't have the impression that there is much denunciation – as it was before. I have been a single mother myself so I know something about this: some people were envious because I received money just like that and that they had to work. My own attitudes towards single mothers: I think it is OK that they receive the support. It is not always easy to get a job either (Respondent B-35 – *Middle aged worker*).

Since I was around 15 years old the moral attitudes towards single mothers have *changed* totally, so there is not much negativity compared to past times (Respondent B-39 – *Middle class*).

This is nothing that people in my circle of acquaintances would react (negatively) upon. I don't think so. Not anymore. Maybe 15 years ago. Because the society has changed a

¹⁷³ This respondent stated that he supported the liberal attitudes he was speaking of.

lot, it is definitely more tolerant *now* than it has been. It is more accepted that you might have a stroke of bad luck, but that you may get back on the straight and narrow (Respondent B-42 – *Middle class*).

It is not as bad as it was before to be a single mother here. Before it was unusual, but now it has become more common. But of course: this is a place where one shall be pretty successful. ... I think the society (the state) should help them (Respondent B-37 – *Middle class*).

I don't think people look down on them, because there is so much of it now. I believe all are confident with the notion that we shall help them. That is the impression I have. I think it is very important to take care of a child. And I believe people think that, in spite of everything, she (a single mother) is taking care of a child (Respondent B-32 – *middle aged worker*).

I don't think people around here look down on a single mother who receives monetary support from the Social Security Office. In spite of everything, there is a reason for it. I think people, at least I do, blame causal factors; the things that have happened. *She is only a product of history* (Respondent B-43 – *Middle class*).

Part of the community in “the Bay” is characterised by pietism – within certain religious circles. But I believe that you even there will recognise different attitudes towards single mothers *now* than earlier. Today broken families and different types of family forms are more common. Before one was condemned for having committed a sin if one was a single mother.... (Respondent B-47- *Middle class*).

Appendix 4.10: The quotes below represent similar judgments as with respondent B-38 (*Middle class*) and show the conditionality of worthiness:

It depends on how she (a single mother) behaves. If she gives the impression, through her behaviour, that she does not care about anything, then she will be seen as an outsider in this community. I know of girls who have come on the downward path, got a child and then managed to come back again. No one sees them as different from other people, then (Respondent B-23 – *Young worker*).

It depends upon the situation, I believe. If they have the possibility to work then it is OK (to receive financial support from the Social Security Office). But if they spend the money on partying and drugs, then it clearly is something negative. But I don't know how it is (Respondent B-24- *Young worker*).

I don't think there are any condemning attitudes towards single mothers here. Of course some talk about it and says “Oh – she is pregnant”. But that does not mean that she is seen as a bad person. .. I think the society (the state) should support them. You know it is expensive to have kids and they grow real fast. I think it is good that the support is for three years, then they have to do something (Respondent B-25 – *Young Worker*).

Most people accept this, but they might feel sorry for her. It is OK that the welfare bureaucracies help them, but the single mothers must put in an effort themselves. The welfare bureaucracies should not take all responsibilities (Respondent B-30 – *Middle aged worker*).

Single mothers are found everywhere, not only here in “the Bay”. This is easier for people to accept *now* than some decades ago. I believe people of today accept “everything” compared to before. I think the public (welfare state) ought to help them at an early stage, if possible. But they should not help them *time after time* if they are not motivated (Respondent B-31 - *Middle aged worker*).

I don't think it is abnormal to be a single mother; it happens to many to put it that way. At least I think that younger persons in “the Bay” do not react negatively upon single motherhood. The only thing I see is that they might lose the opportunity to get an education since they have to take care of a child. To catch up with an educational career later might be difficult (Respondent B-20- *Young worker*).

People around here will not look down on a single mother; they would rather say we should help them. This might have been different let's say 15 years ago, then there perhaps were more of a “religious thing” around here. I think we should help them, but not just give them money. They have to follow them up those who support them – the Social Welfare Office and the Social Security Office – and all that. Have to secure that they attend school and so on. I know personally a single mother that went to school then and now has a job; I admire her because she has really put in an effort herself (Respondent B-34 – *Middle-aged worker*).

Appendix 4.11: *The middle class respondents were preoccupied with single mothers pursuing “the educational project”.* The quotes below represent similar viewpoints as with respondent B-46 (*middle class*):

I believe people think that they sometimes give birth to the child too early. It is too early because you should try to get some *education*, live your life and be a youth (Respondent B-38 – *Middle class*).

I think it is very unfortunate to become a single mother when very young. I think so, because they *destroy* their adolescence, and it gets more difficult to get an *education*. Some of them grow as human beings, become quite responsible. So it may cut both ways (Respondent B-39 – *Middle class*)

We noticed at the folk high-school, how motivated single mothers were for example to take on higher *education*. We had an arrangement making it possible to look after the children, so they were able to attend school. They really had a good time, you know (Respondent B-45 – *Middle class*).

Appendix 4.12: *The middle class respondents also commented upon the economic position of the single mothers in “the Bay” – related to economic distance.* The quotes below represent similar viewpoints as with respondent B-41:

This community is a society with successful people. You are supposed to be successful. Maybe one does not want to see the unsuccessful. I know, from my job, discussions on whether we should support single mothers financially, in addition to their allowance from the Social Security Office. A prevalent attitude was that the single mothers ought to manage on their security benefit, when they had gotten into that position (Respondent B-36¹⁷⁴).

¹⁷⁴ Respondent B-36 is a former social worker at the Social Welfare Office in “the Bay”.

Of course, those who try to keep up with the millionaires they have a (financial) problem, also in connection to their children. Some see this as a goal, to be able to keep up. It is visible in the school (Respondent B-40).

Teachers and parents say that they sense a pressure, for instance when it comes to branded clothes and things like that. This means that the children and the homes which do not keep up they will learn about it. So there are tendencies towards “snobbism” in “the Bay” (Respondent B-45).

The judgment of unemployed youth: the laziness discourse:

Appendix 4.13: The quotes below represent similar judgments as found among respondent B-25 (*young worker*) and B-30 (*middle-aged worker*):

It is not a good thing to *be lazy*. *Everyone should work*. There are some outsiders here. *It is wrong to receive money if you do not work*. I know of young persons who are clients with the Social Welfare Office. It is seen as *laziness*, they can't face working and often they are abusing drugs. I look down on them a bit, but don't care that much (Respondent B-26 – *Young worker*).

A lot of them that I know are just *lazy*. They don't want to work, or they will not help themselves. These are such that the Social Security Office and others back so well up that it does not help them. That is the way I see it. My *impression* is that *they get unemployment benefit just like that*. They demand a lot, it is “not their fault”. That is typical (Respondent B-27 - *Young worker*).

Norwegian people are tired of working, they want to work little and receive a good wage. Fifty percent of them are *lazy*, you see. That goes for youth applying for jobs today, also. They want a lot of leisure time, and good pay (Respondent B-19 – *Middle-aged worker*).

The judgment of unemployed youth – the complexity discourse:

Appendix 4.14: The quotes below represent similar judgments as with respondent B-20 (*Young worker*):

I know of some. It looks like they have problems getting a job. I have not discussed with people in the community what they think of the young and unemployed. Maybe it is their own fault? *Oh, I really don't know* (Respondent B-21 – *young worker*).

I really don't know that many that goes to the Social Security Office and the Social Welfare Office. *If it is youth that do not want to work and just receive social security, then I believe it is pretty negative: if they are completely well and can manage a job...*(Respondent B-24 – *Young worker*).

It is difficult (for me) to say how they are judged (in this community). This is a small-town so everybody knows about everyone else. So it is maybe like that. Maybe people nowadays are more concerned with helping them (?). What the companies do to help, this I don't know (Respondent B-35 - *middle-aged worker*).

Appendix 4.15: The quotes below represent similar judgments as identified among respondent B- 29 (*middle-aged worker*):

If you are abusing drugs and unemployed; you will be seen as an outsider in this community. People would probably see him as someone who does not want to do anything. I think it is a poor solution to just give money; one must try to integrate them into something. Give them a task so that they have something to do. If it is possible one should demand something from them. *But it differs from person to person, what is realistic.* They must feel that they are worth something. Earlier I knew people in different cultures (locally). Persons who are from a “good home” may turn and come on the downward path. They get into the wrong culture. Either they get out of that culture real fast, or they stay there and then that’s it. Many of them are former buddies of mine, and things are getting worse and worse (Respondent B-23 – *Young worker*).

I think they are looked down on in the community. But it (the situation) is not something which he has “arranged” himself. In a way this is something which he is forced into. (...) It is important that there is cooperation between the Social Security Office, the Social Welfare Office or “the public agencies” towards the local companies, so it will be possible to integrate them into work (Respondent B-22 – *Young worker*).

It has showed many times that, even if some get on the downward path in their teens, they suddenly *change* and want to live a *different* life. “I want to be like everyone else, go to school, get a job and found a family”. So I do in fact admire them. I don’t only want to blame them. People around here will look down on them, I think. But the day you get a job, then the majority will wipe the slate clean and accept you (Respondent B-34 – *Middle-aged worker*).

It appears that *some* of those that are on the downward path; they manage to get straight by just getting into work. I think that those that get into trouble are *tired of the school system* (Respondent B-31 – *Middle-aged worker*).

It is often that the parents have the same kind of problems, and then their children get into the same situation. I can see that in this community also. It is just as if the problems are inherited (Respondent B-32 – *Middle-age worker*).

I know very little of them. Of course you may see some of them in the town centre. It is very easy to *condemn* them. *But I try to avoid that.* It is very easy to cross “the limit”, probably. I believe one should try to help no matter what is the reason behind it; whether it is self-inflicted or whether you may blame it on the period of adolescence. Everyone is entitled to an adequate life. To put people on the street does not help anyone. Then you just may create a culture for those who are seen as losers, and they mix together. Then you probably will witness the rise of a criminal culture, I guess. Here in “the Bay” we do not have a really tough criminal culture. (...) I think the welfare bureaucracies must do a much better job. It is not enough to invite people to a meeting, sit around a table nodding – something must happen. (...) When people are labelled once, this will follow you through the years. It will. If you have done something (bad) during adolescence, it is something which will follow you all your life, even if you behave well and get into the working life later. This I know. People at my age who for the last 15 years have been working seriously, because of things that happened while growing up, they are labelled. They may get problems in connection to job applications and different things (Respondent B-33 – *Middle-age worker*).

I think people around here will look upon an unemployed youth as one of the hopeless; the drug addicts that live on public welfare; that they are pampered by the Social Welfare Office and spend the money on drugs. It’s like hearing the voice of my father: “put them into work!”. But I think if they have a drug problem then it is not enough to

put them into work unless you try to motivate them and offer treatment (Respondent B-36 – *Middle class*).

When they are grown up, and supposed to manage on their own, then we might forget about *their problematic background*. We also may be condemning towards them. Sometimes, when I have become angry at the eldest drug-abusers, I have forgotten about their adolescence and their background. You should not pay too much attention to that I think, but keep it at the back of your mind (Respondent B-38 – *Middle class*).

I think people will look on him negatively, at least when you have reached the age of 20. Then I think a lot of people around here believe that you ought to pull yourself together and do something yourself. You may feel sorry for him when he is a child growing up in an alcohol abusing home, but when he is grown up, then... (Respondent B-37 – *Middle class*).

It is important around here to be useful and participate. It is not good to be a parasite on the social security benefits, and the like. The younger generation reacts to the economic exploitation of the welfare system – exploitation of the rules, while it seems like the older generation look upon this in relation to whether you have “sweated for it”. For the older generation, it was important and a duty to wipe the sweat of your forehead before you received something” (Respondent B-47 – *Middle class*).

You can tell from the day that they are born how the development will be. Obviously, it is a tragic situation. I have seen examples of it; it had to turn out that way. It has definitely to do with social inheritance, I am afraid. I don’t think it has anything to do with “nature”. *It is socially created*. The way I have seen it, it is very rare that someone manages to get out of that situation by their own nature and logic. To be able to get out of it, I do believe they need help (Respondent B-42 – *Middle class*).

I think that negative attitudes towards unemployed youth, which seems unfair to them, is because people just know them *superficially*; and believe that one knows what needs to be known: Fostering anti-attitudes like “Why are you just receiving social service and not get you into work?” I think that sometimes it is a bit *difficult* for those working in the welfare bureaucracies trying to find out *what to do* towards them. Getting help from the Social Welfare Office and the Social Security Office is like a “wage”. They should be given help, but also be met with demands – like doing work (Respondent B-45 – *Middle class*).

Appendix 4.16: The quote below represents similar judgments as with respondent B-46 (*middle class*):

You wonder what the reason is. It doesn’t need to be that you are lazy or lack the will (to work). It may be that you are *sick*. One should help them; it is more expensive for society not to help (Respondent B-44 – *Middle class*).

Appendix 4.17: The quote below represents similar judgments as with respondent B-41 (*middle class*):

I believe the Local Employment Office here does a good job. They do a lot of counselling, and I think it is great if they are able to help a young and unemployed

person to find a suitable job. Show them what kind of courses and educations that may secure a job (Respondent B-39 – *Middle class*).

Appendices to chapter six

The appendices to chapter six document similar client experiences as those quoted in the chapter, and are organised by community, client category and type of discourse.

Client experiences in “the Fjord”

The nonvoluntariness/stigmatisation discourse among unemployed youth in “the Fjord”

Appendix 6.1:

The respondents quoted below had similar experiences as respondent F-5:

F-3 was a 21-year old man, who grew up in “the Fjord” and had lived there continuously for 14 years. He was attending sports activities in younger years, did not like the compulsory school much but has studied afterwards. His mother and father lived in the community, and he explained that he had a circle of friends with whom he interacted. He showed negative attitudes towards working in the fish industry, but thought it is all right to use the local welfare bureaucracies, even if one does not want to work for the fish industry. He has had temporary work, and sporadic contact with the Social Welfare Office and the Local Employment Office while unemployed. He has basically received financial support. He thought it was a good thing that the two welfare bureaucracies were present in the community, and has been well treated by the officials. In essence he did not tell a story easily linked to a felt stigma, save for one exception. To seek help at the Social Welfare Office was something which he had done reluctantly – probably because it opposed his norms concerning the definition of the legitimate means to manage financially. *F-3* wanted to make his income via the local working life, and thus *conform* to the *normal* way of doing this, but saw himself as forced to use the welfare bureaucracies.

At first I did not want to go there. I wanted to manage on my own. But, when I was laid off and did not receive money at first because of slow processing of my application for monetary allowance (*dagpenger*); then you are obliged to do it (Respondent *F-3*).

F-6 was a young man aged 22, who mainly grew up in “the Fjord”. He dropped out of school, and has had temporary work locally. He has been working for the *lossesentral*, and also tried the fish industry. In younger years he was attending organized activities with the local sports club. His father was unemployed, and his mother worked in the fish industry. He has used the Local Employment Office as well as the Social Welfare Office. He stated that he has been treated well at both offices (unproblematic interaction, which has not evoked feeling of shame

or embarrassment), and thought he has been helped well too. His experiences were mixed concerning the Social Welfare Office, since becoming a client at this agency implied for him to pass a threshold. It seems like his ties to his family implied a pressure to be *conforming* or *normal*, but that he was structurally forced to use the services the office had to offer, since he was unable to secure his income through the local working life. The norms of his next of kin illustrate the relational dimension in the production of the felt stigma.

In the *beginning* it was a bit *humiliating* to go there. It was something I had never done before and no one in my family either. *It was bad for my mother in the beginning*, because she thought I should never need to go to the Social Welfare Office. I told her: “Do you have any money to give to me? I don’t want to take your money” (Respondent F-6).

The worthiness discourse among unemployed youth in “the Fjord”

Appendix 6.2: The respondent quoted below had similar experiences as respondent F-1:

F-2 was a woman aged 28, an immigrant, and had lived six years in “the Fjord”. She had an agricultural education, and was motivated for further studies. She had a boyfriend who was employed locally and relatives in the community. F-2 was on rehabilitation because of a back-injury, and saw the labour market in “the Fjord” as rather limited in relation to her situation, and she viewed working in the fish industry as *undesirable*. She has worked in the fish industry, and had temporary work some years ago. F-2 has been unemployed for three years, while on rehabilitation. She has basically had a relation to the Local Employment Office, and thought that using the Social Welfare Office is generally (and permanently) looked down on by the people living in “the Fjord” – because this is seen as the last resort, proving one is unfit for working life. On the other hand, the respondent had no individual inhibitions about using the services of the Social Welfare Office. In fact F-2 may be interpreted as one who believes that the Social Welfare Office is a *legitimate agency* designed to help people in need, and this understanding sets aside the seen disapproval using this office by “others” in “the Fjord”. F-2 did not relate strongly to the local work ethic when reasoning about her client position.

It is something one is talking about; that you go to the Social Welfare Office to get money so you can buy yourself some food. But if I myself got into trouble, I would not hesitate to go there, *because that is why they are there*. So if I had problems and no money I would go there (Respondent F-2).

The worthiness discourse among single mothers in “the Fjord”

Appendix 6.3: The respondents quoted below had similar experiences as respondent F-10:

F-7 was a woman of 27, who had immigrated to “the Fjord” from the Faeroes seven years ago. After finishing some further education on her native soil, she wanted to explore Norway and got a job in “the Fjord”. She has had a steady job while staying in the community save for a four month leave, and worked at the present time as cutting fillets in the fish industry, but she dreamed of taking more education, and wanted to become a nurse. When she arrived in the community she met a local man, and they got a daughter but they were not together anymore. She thought that being a single mother is quite common and a normal position to be in, locally. She has not experienced being condemned because of her social position as a single mother. F-7 has had sporadic contact with the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office. F-7 works for the local fish companies and in “addition” receives her statutory rights as a single mother. This means that the client position for her was seen as legitimate, since she was conforming to what the “locals” in this community are expected to do.

I have had contact with the Local Employment Office when I was laid off, and when I wanted to apply for a school. When I was there for the school application, I think I received little help. She knew little or nothing, and only gave me some brochures and stuff. I am very seldom at the Social Security Office. That’s only when I am there to deliver papers and so on; since I am single. *I have only been there with the papers*, but they are kind and light spirited. *I have not really had much need for them*. Everything has been ok (Respondent F-7).

F-8 was a woman of 24, who had moved to “the Fjord” from a small community in a neighbouring county because she got a job in the fish industry. She had lived in “the Fjord” for five years, while all her relatives (parents and four siblings) lived in her hometown. She had gained a great circle of acquaintances in the community. F-8 had compulsory school only, and was not motivated for further studies. She was alone with one child, and believed that single motherhood is rather common in “the Fjord” and that the community shows liberal attitudes towards single mothers compared to other parts of the country.

She has some perceptions of her relations with the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office which were not very in-depth. F-8 worked as a cutter in the fish industry and received her statutory rights as a single mother.

I don’t know them (the Social Security Office) all that well. But it has gone well by and large. They have been very ok. When I have asked about things, they have tried to do

the best. When I have been laid off I have been at the Local Employment Office (Respondent F-8).

F-12 was a woman of 28. She emigrated to “the Fjord” from Russia and had been living in the community for five years. She was alone with one child, aged eight. She had some work experience from the fish industry, but has been working in a shop for a couple of years. She stated that all her friends locally were employed, and that she literally knew no one who was unemployed. Her educational experience was from Russia, where she had studied at a University. F-12 saw no problems being a single mother in “the Fjord” concerning social status; this was seen as accepted.

I think it is ok to be a single mother in “the Fjord”. There are no problems with that, and nothing to complain about (Respondent F-12).

She has had some contact with the Local Employment Office and the Social Security Office in “the Fjord”. Her relation with the offices was of a rudimentary kind; gaining basic information on services available and delivering applications for courses to qualify for the labour market. She made a clear-cut distinction regarding the Social Welfare Office, which she thought was basically serving “the lazy” in the community (see appendix 6.4, where F-12 is quoted on this topic).

I have been at the Local Employment Office and got included in a work training program there. I get financial support from the Social Security Office since my son has not reached the age of eight yet. I do not know “everything” about what I am entitled to there, and to get answers I go to the Social Security Office. I do never go to the Social Welfare Office (Respondent F-12).

She revealed a very strong work ethic, and was genuinely sceptical towards young person’s receiving social assistance. F-12 basically believed that one should put up with the work in the fish industry.

Appendix 6.4: Part of the worthiness discourse among single mothers in “the Fjord” was their critical judgments of unemployed youth in that community. The respondents quoted below were of the same type as with respondent F-8:

Here in “the Fjord” there is actually a job for everyone who wants to work. So if you are long term unemployed it is because you won’t work (Respondent F-7).

I guess there are those who are work-shy. Young men who can do everything, but when it comes to work they have a “bad back”. They have found out, and come within a vicious circle: “Work? *Then I have to get up early, then I have to do something; no!*” They stay at home, sleep late and go to the pub. Go to the Social Welfare Office and

receive money. I get irritated because it is just as if the Social Welfare Office gives them everything. *Orsken*¹⁷⁵. It is *orsken*. “I can’t stand it; so I go there to collect money” (Respondent F-11).

I think that a young man who does not have a job - then it is because he is lazy. I don’t like that. One ought to work. I don’t like people who do not do anything. They use the Social Welfare Office and take money there. If it is a man of 20, he should not go to the Social Welfare Office. He has two hands and he is well. He can perform work, that’s what I think. It is a Norwegian system. My opinion is that if you are using drugs, then I don’t think it is right to go to the Social Welfare Office and receive money. Because it is my money he gets. It is we who pay the taxes and pay him. I don’t think it is right (Respondent F-12¹⁷⁶).

The interactional stigmatization discourse among single mothers in “the Fjord”:

Appendix 6.5: The respondent quoted below had similar experiences as respondent F-9:

F-11 was a woman aged 23. She had moved to “the Fjord” from a town five years ago. All her relatives were living around that town, and she stated that she was often in contact with them. She enjoyed attending school, received good grades and was interested in further studies. She was working in a shop, and she had one child, and saw no problems which were related to the social status of being a single mother in “the Fjord”. F-11 had firsthand contacts with the Social Welfare Office and the Social Security Office. She had negative experiences with both offices. The experiences are connected to the interaction with officials, and properties of the services delivered. Her relation to the Social Welfare Office was due to the pursuit of a weekend home for her child, and she complained about the slowness of the decision to be made concerning her case, as well as the evoking of feelings of *shame* through the relation with a specific official.

The Social Welfare Office arrange for weekend homes. She said that my application would be considered a prioritised case. That was in the beginning of December, and now it is February – and still it is not settled. *I think it is difficult to go there*; and one of those who works there (the social worker), is *grumpy* one time and always. *She is not fit for a job like that*. I know families where both parents are working, who have received a weekend home. But I who am alone haven’t got one. So when I go to the office and ask about this, *I am met with a bad grace*. I think it is difficult (Respondent F-11).

She was also disappointed concerning the Social Security Office, because of perceived delay of payments, and her experiences resembled those of F-9. The interaction with the office was

¹⁷⁵ The north Norwegian dialectal word “orsken” means something similar to “endurance” in English. In this context, the respondent refers to young persons who cannot stand the work in the fish industry—in the eyes of the respondent, that is.

¹⁷⁶ It may well be underlined that respondent F-12 stated that she personally did not know any unemployed person in this small community.

seen as a humiliating experience, since she felt as if she was seen as a weak human being through the relation to the official.

I have a case with the Social Security Office because I am not receiving my money at the right time. I got too little for my transitory benefit. I asked them about this, and they have been obstinate, and I talked to them four times during one week, and checked with my bank. *So it feels just like they are taking the money right out of their own pocket.* But they have not admitted that they made a mistake, but I am *dependent upon them* to be able to *pay the rent* (Respondent F-11)

Client experiences in “the Bay”

The stigmatization discourse among unemployed youth in “the Bay”

Appendix 6.6: The respondent quoted below had similar experiences as respondent B-3:

B-5 was a man aged 29, who was born and raised in the community, and grew up in a violent and alcoholic home. When he was younger he participated in different types of sport activities, but dropped out eventually. When he attended the compulsory school he had learning disabilities, and received special attention for this. Later on he took further education after compulsory school was completed. His adolescence must be described as rather dramatic, and this was much related to conflicts with his father. The quote below may also be interpreted as underlining the *worthiness* produced by *misery* in connection with becoming a client of services, and the legitimate background for using the welfare bureaucracies.

My home was totally a madhouse. We dreaded him coming home from the sea. Then all the liquor came in the house, and it was wild partying for three weeks, until he left again. We really hated him. He beat my mother a lot and I found her in a pool of blood many times; unconscious. I tried one time, while on drugs, to kill my father. That is something which has bothered me ever since, because everything got worse after that (Respondent B-5).

B-5 had very little work experience, and problems in obtaining a job in the community, mostly because of his heavy abuse of a variety of drugs. For years he had been part of a drug culture, but this was outside of “the Bay”. Because of the drug abuse he reported on having mental problems, for which he had been treated. He had rather few friends in the community, but underlined the importance of a caring neighbour who looked after him. At the time of the interview he was receiving job training arranged by the Social Welfare Office, and worked at a sheltered workshop. He had no relationship to the Social Security Office, some with the Local Employment Office and a long-term one with the Social Welfare Office. Basically he was satisfied with the interaction between the offices and himself. The Local Employment Office was seen as a “distant” and non- intruding service.

The Local Employment Office is a place where you show up once, and then you get a pile of forms in the mail – and that’s all. Then you have nothing more to do with them. They don’t follow you up; they are just there. I think the Local Employment Office is a lot like that; it is very much up to you. You must have the initiative if you want something in return (Respondent B-5).

His experience with the Social Welfare Office must be regarded as dual. He was satisfied by the way he had been treated and helped, and the relations to the officials had not represented anything of a burden for him.

I think it has been an ok experience, because I have met officials at the Social Welfare Office, who have been very nice to me. I was not all that talkative about my problems with them, but I have been treated really well. I think I always have been met with respect, to be frankly about it. They helped me getting this apartment, and together with the Local Employment Office they helped me getting work training (Respondent B-5).

This experience is in sharp contrast to how he perceived the way he was *seen* as a client at the Social Welfare Office. Basically he saw this as being *labelled* as an individual, because he felt stereotyped concerning drug abuse and mental problems. His argument should be seen against the background that he believed “the Bay” to be a transparent community. It is possible to interpret B-5’s experience as a sign of stigmatisation that is relationally produced.

To put it bluntly; you are looked down on. You are seen as inferior because of the prejudice *people* have towards drug abuse and mental problems. You sense that as a concrete reality, that no one feels sorry for you, even if you are so miserable that you are about to die. *People* either tread over you, ignore you or think you are dirt and let you know it. You lose friends and people keep aloof from you. Some get scared, and others think you are disgusting. But everything is negative (Respondent B-5).

Aspects of B-5’s perception of the position as a client may be linked to a stigma framework, because of the stigmatising of him as a weak, and perhaps even a bad and dangerous human being.

Appendix 6.7: The respondent quoted below had similar experiences as respondent B-8:

B- 4 was a young woman of 19, adopted from a third world country as a baby, and had been living in the region ever since. She had lived in “the Bay” for a couple of years, but stated that she grew up in one of the adjoining municipalities. In earlier years she partied a lot, tried marihuana once, but she was living straight at the moment. She had been a hang around in the local drug culture in “the Bay”, but without taking drugs herself. At present she had a boyfriend, who was a former drug addict and a core member of the local drug culture. Both of them had dissociated themselves from that drug culture. B-4 stated that her boyfriend wanted to become straight, but that they as a couple were fairly isolated socially at the moment. While growing up she received special attention at school, because of a learning disability.

She was motivated for further education. She had hardly any work experience, partly due to a physical handicap, but stated that she had the initiative to work, and would rather make her income through the local working life than to rely upon public support.

I don't think I will become a person who is doing nothing, because I would not have managed that. I was reported on sick leave for two months, and I thought I was going to be crazy (Respondent B-4).

B-4 received financial support from the Social Security Office due to her handicap, but did not report on any kind of experience with the office. While unemployed she has had contact with the Local Employment Office, which was seen as a rather positive experience.

I feel I have been very fortunate, you see. Because, I feel I got an official who was very kind and ok. I could call her any time, and talk to her about everything. She helped me, because I was very young and insecure, she helped me to keep that job. Not every official is that accommodating, so I think I really got lucky (Respondent B-4).

B-4 had some experiences with the Social Welfare Office which was a quite different story.

I have been at the Social Welfare Office a couple of times to receive some money for buying food and paying some bills. I don't think anything good about that, because I think it is humiliating. *Why do you feel that?* It is because other people see me entering the office. And *I think that they think that I am* still hanging around that drug culture. Maybe people think: "Does she not have money?". "What is she spending the money on?" And I feel that the officials won't give me money because I am living with a former drug addict, because they might think the money will be used to finance his drug abuse. *It is very embarrassing* (Respondent-B4).

The understanding of her contact with the Social Welfare Office was one which may be seen as a felt stigma, and maybe also a version of the tribal stigma. To become a client at this office evoked the feeling of shame, since she had not been able to cope financially on her own. This experience should be linked to her attitudes to work; she wanted to get a job and earn her wage through the local working life. The main point in her statement was that B-4 believed she was not seen as an individual person, but judged by her *relations* to her boyfriend, which then again is the gateway to being linked to the drug culture in "the Bay". This is to be considered as a version of the tribal stigma, getting labelled as bad, dangerous or representing the weak will, by association. B-4 believed she was labelled by "people" in the community, but it is not quite certain whether this is a social reality or a cognitive construct, but the labelling anyway became a reality and a burden to her. A main problem for her was

the alleged linking of her with a drug culture she neither interacted nor identified with. She believed she may become *misunderstood* as an individual.

The acceptance discourse among unemployed youth in “the Bay”

Appendix 6.8: The respondents quoted below had similar experiences as respondent B-7:

B-1 was a man in his early 20s. He grew up in “the Bay”, and did not enjoy the compulsory school much. He was on rehabilitation because of physical problems, but had some work experience and supported the work ethic of “the Bay”. B-1 had rudimentary experiences with the local welfare bureaucracies, and had no negative experiences with the welfare bureaucracies at all.

I am quite “new” at the Local Employment Office. I have been there once, attending a meeting. It seems ok and I get answers to my questions. ... They are quite ok at the Social Security Office also. They answer my questions, and they called me in for a meeting to inform me on things (Respondent B-1).

B-9 was a young woman of 19, who grew up in “the Bay”. She had participated in organised leisure activities when she was younger. She obtained good grades at school, but was bullied for obesity. She had some work experience, but was at present at home with an infant. She had a boyfriend who was working. For some time she was part of a drug culture locally, but was no longer part of it. Because of a weak economy B-9 has had some relations with the Social Welfare Office, but this was of a recent and rudimentary kind. She thought she had been well treated, but could wish for more information on her *rights* and believed that some of their decisions were unpredictable. The main content of B-9’s story was however that she did not reflect much upon her relation with the office. The ability to think of the welfare bureaucracies in terms of *rights*, and not what people locally may think, makes it reasonable to interpret her as within the worthiness discourse.

I made contact with the Social Welfare Office some three months ago. I have got some help from them, and they have been ok. I have nothing to complain about. ... But I don’t know what rights I have there. They haven’t said anything about that (Respondent B-9).

The low bureaucratic efficiency discourse among unemployed youth in “the Bay”

Appendix 6.9: The respondent quoted below had similar experiences as B-6.

B-2 was negative towards the Local Employment Office for two reasons. His personal experience was that the office lacked efficiency in finding jobs. Secondly, he thought that work offered by them was paid too bad, compared to what normal wage earners might get.

I don't believe in the Local Employment Office. It is just to figure on a list as unemployed. I have been out of work for six months now, without getting an offer from them. I have fixed the jobs myself. ... If you start working for the Local Employment Office you only get Nkr. 250 or Nkr 150. That is little; then you don't want to work. I think it is quite silly (Respondent B-2).

The worthiness discourse among single mothers in “the Bay”

Appendix 6.10: The respondents quoted below had similar experiences as respondents B-16, B-15 and B-13:

B-12 was in her early 20s and got a child when she was 18. She grew up in “the Bay” and had some work experience. She did not mix with other single mothers, and had not experienced any negative comments on her marital status. Her family supported her when she got pregnant. She was motivated to get herself an education, and believed the rules regulating financial support was “OK”. B-12 had relations with the Social Security Office, and had nothing to complain about according to herself. She suggested that “strait” people living in “the Bay” look down on those using the Social Welfare Office.

I have not recognized any moral denunciation because I am a single mother. My father was a bit negative in the beginning because I was so young, but I believe it was just something he said at the time. ... I have not heard any negative because I am receiving support from the Social Security Office. I think it is quite ok that the period of financial support is just three years. My goal right now is to get an education and a job, so for me it is ok that the support is for three years. ... I think that people look a bit down on those using the Social Welfare Office; that they get things too easy (Respondent B-12).

B-17 was a woman of 28. She grew up in a nearby town, and had only lived in “the Bay” for two years. Her parents were employed, and she had a younger sister. While growing up she participated in organised leisure activities. She was the mother of one child, which she got at the age of 21. She had taken some education after compulsory school, and was at the time an apprentice. She stated that she was a bit isolated, which implied that B-17 was not socially

integrated in “the Bay”. She was satisfied with her relationship with the Social Security Office (a safety wall, financially – as she put it) – but nearly all her reflections were from another municipality where she made initial contact with the local Social Security Office. Actually, B-17 had during the two years she had lived in “the Bay” just had written communication with the Social Security Office in “the Bay”. Basically the rules at this office were in conjunction with her future plans.

I have had financial support since 1996. They told me when I got into the system that the support was for three years, but since I am undertaking an educational program I get financial support until I am finished. I think that is good (Respondent B-17).

B-18 was a woman aged 33, who had lived most of her life in the community. She had taken some further education after compulsory school, and was working at the present time. She was the mother of two children. She had some contact with the genitor, and her parents were living in “the Bay”. She had only rudimentary contacts with the Social Security Office and the Local Employment Office, and really not much of any reflections on this either. Her experiences are to be considered as part of the worthiness discourse. This is related to the lack of shameful interaction with the agencies, the fact that she is working, and that she stayed away from the Social Welfare Office (cf. also appendix 6.10).

I once received financial support from the Local Employment Office, it was not difficult to go there – and later I fixed a job on my own. I have had little contact with the Social Security Office, but receive financial support from them, and I believe I have been given relevant information from them on what I am entitled to. I have not had contact with any other public offices (Respondent B-18).

Appendix 6.11: *Part of the worthiness discourse among single mothers in “the Bay” was their critical judgments of unemployed youth in that community.* The respondent quoted below was of the same type as with respondent B-18:

I think that people basically *ought to manage on their own*. If they are not functioning in a certain type of work then I think they should get help to get into a work situation, which they are able to manage. But of course, if you are an apathetic type who shifts jobs all the time, then it is something else (Respondent B-15).

Respondent overview

Respondents in the Fjord

Coding	Category of respondents	Gender
F-1	Unemployed youth	Female
F-2	Unemployed youth	Female
F-3	Unemployed youth	Male
F-4	Unemployed youth	Male
F-5	Unemployed youth	Male
F-6	Unemployed youth	Male
F-7	Single mothers	Female
F-8	Single mothers	Female
F-9	Single mothers	Female
F-10	Single mothers	Female
F-11	Single mothers	Female
F-12	Single mothers	Female
F-13	Young workers	Female
F-14	Young workers	Male
F-15	Young workers	Female
F-16	Young workers	Male
F-17	Young workers	Female
F-18	Young Workers	Female
F-19	Young Workers	Female
F-20	Young Workers	Male
F-21	Young Workers	Male
F-22	Young workers	Male
F-23	Middle-aged workers	Female
F-24	Middle-aged workers	Female
F-25	Middle-aged workers	Male
F-26	Middle-aged workers	Male
F-27	Middle-aged workers	Male
F-28	Middle-aged workers	Female
F-29	Middle-aged workers	Female
F-30	Middle-aged workers	Female
F-31	Middle-aged workers	Female
F-32	Middle class	Female
F-33	Middle class	Female
F-34	Middle class	Male
F-35	Middle class	Male
F-36	Middle class	Female
F-37	Middle class	Female
F-38	Welfare bureaucrats (official social welfare office)	Female
F-39	Welfare bureaucrats (official social	Male

	welfare office)	
F-40	Welfare bureaucrats (leader/official social security office)	Female
F-41	Welfare bureaucrats (official social welfare office)	Female
F-42	Welfare bureaucrats (leader/official local employment office)	Female
F-43	Welfare bureaucrats (official social security office)	Female
F-44	Middle Class	Female
F-45	Middle Class	Female
F-46	Welfare bureaucrats (official local employment office) <i>2005</i>	Female
F-47	Welfare bureaucrats (official social welfare office) <i>2005</i>	Female

Respondents in the Bay

Coding	Category of respondents	Gender
B-1	Unemployed youth	Male
B-2	Unemployed youth	Male
B-3	Unemployed youth	Male
B-4	Unemployed youth	Female
B-5	Unemployed youth	Male
B-6	Unemployed youth	Male
B-7	Unemployed youth	Female
B-8	Unemployed youth	Female
B-9	Unemployed youth	Female
B-10	Unemployed youth	Male
B-11	Unemployed youth	Male
B-12	Single mother	Female
B-13	Single mother	Female
B-14	Single mother	Female
B-15	Single mother	Female
B-16	Single mother	Female
B-17	Single mother	Female
B-18	Single mother	Female
B-19	Middle-age worker	Female
B-20	Young workers	Male
B-21	Young workers	Male
B-22	Young workers	Male
B-23	Young workers	Male
B-24	Young workers	Male
B-25	Young workers	Female
B-26	Young workers	Female
B-27	Young workers	Male
B-28	Middle-aged workers	Female
B-29	Middle-aged workers	Male
B-30	Middle-aged workers	Male
B-31	Middle-aged workers	Male
B-32	Middle-aged workers	Female
B-33	Middle-aged workers	Male
B-34	Middle-aged workers	Female
B-35	Middle-aged workers	Female
B-36	Middle Class	Female
B-37	Middle Class	Female
B-38	Middle Class	Female
B-39	Middle Class	Female
B-40	Middle Class	Male
B-41	Middle Class	Female
B-42	Middle Class	Male
B-43	Middle Class	Male
B-44	Middle Class	Male
B-45	Middle Class	Male
B-46	Middle Class	Male

B-47	Middle Class	Male
B-48	Welfare bureaucracy (leader- employment office)	Female
B-49	Welfare bureaucracy (official social welfare office)	Female
B-50	Welfare bureaucracy (ex- official social welfare office)	Female
B-51	Welfare bureaucracy (official social welfare office)	Female
B-52	Welfare bureaucracy (leader of social welfare office)	Male
B-53	Welfare bureaucracy (official local employment office)	Female
B-54	Welfare bureaucracy (official social security office)	Male
B-55	Welfare bureaucracy (official social security office)	Female
B-57	Welfare bureaucracy (official local employment office). 2005	Female
B-58	Welfare bureaucracy (official local employment office). 2005	Female
B-59	Welfare bureaucracy (official local employment office). 2005	Female
B-60	Welfare bureaucracy (official social welfare office). 2005	Female

(Note: B-56 was a leader of a motor club in “the Bay”. This respondent has been omitted from the material since he is not to be considered as part of the respondents in focus in this work).

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