A Service Disparity for Rural Youth: The Organization of Social Services Across the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch

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Drawing on 14 interviews with services providers and over 80 hours of participant observations, I examine what happens when young people enter into Employment Service, a program of Employment Ontario and the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities. This program is delivered through an organization operating in two sites in Ontario, Canada that I refer as the Urban Youth Centre and the Rural Branch. On paper, it looks like service providers are doing the same work across these sites because the organization as a whole uses the same intake texts to deliver this program and documents the same institutionally imposed outcomes. However, in practice people who work in these sites employ different interpretive schemas to map young people's actual needs onto the pre-determined service outcomes. This occurs because of an unequal distribution and availability of social services within these organizational sites and the communities where they are located. In practice, these work processes obscure the identification and response to rural youths' diverse needs. This article argues that the conditions under which the delivery of Employment Service unfolds are embedded in relations that differentially shape disadvantaged youths' access to social resources.

Key words: *Institutional ethnography; institutional relations; documentary practices; social services; youth*

The Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch operate as a single organization in Ontario, Canada. They split funding dollars, deliver provincially-funded programs, and even share staff. The research for this article began in my talk with staff working in these organizational sites. I spoke with employment counselors from both settings about how their work responded to the needs of young people. Specifically, I focused on young

people's involvement with *Employment Service*, a program delivered across both organizational sites that is funded by Employment Ontario and the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (the Ministry). The purpose of this program is to help people in Ontario find and keep employment.

In the Rural Branch, employment counselors told me that young people's experiences of homelessness, inadequate shelter, addictions, and sexuality did not make it into the intake forms required for Employment Service. Yet, in the Urban Youth Centre, employment counselors said that their documentary practices captured these same needs. Here is where the ethnographic problematic for this article emerged. Across both work sites staff agreed that intake forms functioned as a guideline for how they decided what services, resources, and opportunities to which young people were entitled. How was it that in the rural site some of young people's experiences did not make it into service providers' work?

In this article, I use this problematic to illuminate the institutional processes that transform youths' experiences of being "unattached to the labor force" into actual organizationally actionable service plans. Throughout I show how employment counselors' textual production of young people's needs shapes different service opportunities across the two sites, despite reports that young people come to the two sites with similar experiences of disadvantage. How this happens is itself an organized process. In short, employment counselors' textual work of producing clients in this program—and by extension an organizationally visible need to demonstrate successful placement of clients—is connected to the work or services that staff can provide to youth through each work setting and community. At the local level, this is how the service disparity occurs for rural youth and how inequality is sustained and reproduced.

Institutional Ethnography

Institutional ethnography (IE) (Smith, D. E., 1987, 2005) seeks to discover the ways that people's actual activities and everyday worlds are socially organized. Starting from the standpoint of people situated within a particular local setting—in my case, staff providing service to young people entered into

Employment Service as clients through both sites of this organization—IE aims to uncover the institutional relations that coordinate how people's experiences are put together. In this way, institutional ethnography does not stay in experience, but rather draws on people's everyday worlds to open up an investigation of ruling relations (Campbell & Manicom, 1995).

Smith (D. E., 1990, 2001) argues that people's everyday activities are embedded in discursive and ideological practices. Texts are fundamental to examining how this happens, because they elucidate the links between local experiences and institutional processes which are happening and are organized in various other places (Hicks, 2009; Nichols, 2008; Ng, 1995; Smith, D. E., 2006). Textual analysis, in other words, is focused on the ways that texts enter into what people do. While not central in IE studies, unexplored are the ways that text-mediated processes happen across different sites that are "recognized as representing the same kind of social form," in this case social service organizational sites such as the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch (Smith, D. E., 2005, p. 166). Addressing this omission is important for making visible the inter-organizational dimensions that contribute to an "engine of inequality" (Griffith & Smith, 2005, p. 133). Such a focus also draws attention to the ways in which institutional arrangements afford and constrain the agency of those who provide and use social services.

In this article I investigate the text-mediated work processes involved in bringing young people into Employment Service in the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch. Emerging from staffs' talk about their work activities, this article explores how outcomes for youth are different across the Urban Youth Center and the Rural Branch. To do this, I start the analysis examining what happens during the intake process for Employment Service when youth first meet with employment counselors to assess their individual needs.

Data and Research Activities

I began this project conducting open-ended interviews with employment counselors in both sites about what they did when young people came to see them. This talk led to discussions about how they used standardized forms to determine

eligibility for Employment Service. I then asked where these forms went, who saw these forms, what happened next for youth, and about any subsequent documentary work they were required to do. In total, I conducted 14 interviews with staff across both organizational settings and collected organizational documents that were raised in these conversations. I also spent over 80 hours observing what young people did when they came to the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch and how they were connected to its services. All names and identifying information of participants have been removed and replaced with pseudonyms.

The Employment Service Intake Process

Employment Service, a program of Employment Ontario, helps people find work. In order to achieve this mission, this program is expected to provide information to people about the labor market (i.e., job research boards, local training opportunities, and community supports). In addition, employment counselors often work one-on-one with clients to locate job opportunities and help them prepare for the labor market through job preparation workshops, for example, which include interviewing skills and writing resumes. In Ontario, Employment Service is delivered by 415 local organizations (Employment Ontario, 2014a). Of these organizations, 117 are specific to, or focus on youth (Employment Ontario, 2014b.). The intake process, specified by Employment Ontario and the Ministry guidelines, shapes the work of employment counselors. These guidelines also standardize how staff determine what services will actually be delivered to youth who access this program through the Urban Youth Centre and the Rural Branch. In these sites the intake process involves two forms.

Intake Form One

In order for employment counselors to produce clients in Employment Service, young people must be "out of school, out of work, or underemployed." These items are referred to as "eligibility criteria" by Employment Ontario (2011, pp. 17, 48) and appear in the first form used in the intake process. On this form, employment counselors check off boxes indicating that

any, or all, of these eligibility criteria are present. Unchecked boxes mean that the young person can still seek support around employment but must do so without the one-on-one support of the employment counselor or other individualized services offered through the organization. In short, employ- ment counselors use this first form to screen youth for entry into Employment Service based upon their employment and education status. However, decision-making around program eligibility is not so black and white.

Employment Ontario and the Ministry define who should be most served through Employment Service. These "strategic priorities" organize how employment counselors use this first form to identify young people's needs (Employment Ontario 2011, p. 18). For example, staff say that "a lot of youth might be out of school and out of work" (Laura, Rural Branch), but what matters is identifying characteristics like "being under 18 years of age, having less than a high school education, being new to Canada, having Aboriginal status, and/or having a diagnosed disability" (Tessa, Urban Youth Centre). Making visible these explicit characteristics on this first form "ensures that service providers are providing services to clients who are most in need" (Employment Ontario, 2011, p. 33). Thus, in ad- dition to determining eligibility criteria, this first form gener- ates institutional accounts about particular populations that the program serves.

Importantly, employment counselors also use this first form to understand young people's lives. James, an employ- ment counselor in the Rural Branch, tells me that this first form is:

> something like 11 x 17 and double-sided. It's huge. And most of it is statistical collection with half of an 8 x 11 piece that allows the employment counselor to fill in the blanks on *what they feel is necessary to include.*" (emphasis added)

While there is some autonomy in what employment counsel- ors write down, how they actually document young people's experiences is still loosely defined by Employment Ontario and the Ministry. For example, employment counselors say that they listen for "subjective things like job search skills, your work skills, how good are you on the job and your

communication skills" (James, Rural Branch). "Subjective things" are depicted by staff as providing "wiggle room" in how they document young people's eligibility for Employment Service. James explains how "subjective things" are equivalent to the "suitability indicators" listed in the program guidelines that categorize people's lives based on "workplace performance and interpersonal skills" (Employment Ontario, 2011, p. 20). James' account illustrates this point.

> There are guidelines to meet the more intensive one-on-one support where youth are on a caseload and they have an employment counselor managing their action plan and helping guide them through the steps, and then also maybe even eventually through job matching placement incentives putting them into a job. There's 16 different profile factors … so there's actually a little bit of wiggle room with a couple of those factors that you can kind of write, well they're not really a strong communicator; there's a profile factor.

In practical terms, the formal guidelines shape how young people's experiences get translated into "indicators" and "criteria" recognized by Employment Ontario and the Ministry and how young people are actually served by the Urban Youth Center and its Rural Branch.

Intake Form Two
Once the employment counselor fills out the first intake form, a second self-assessment form is completed by the youth. Tessa (Urban Youth Centre) and James (Rural Branch) tell me that the first intake form is centered on the Employment Service guidelines, while this second form, constructed by management in the organization, uses knowledge about other issues tied to unemployment. Like the first form, the second form is used in both the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch. Employment counselors say that they use this second form in conjunction with the first to determine the "other barriers that are preventing them [youth] from starting their career or getting their survival job that aren't exactly employment related but very much can be the reason they are out of work" (Carla, Urban Youth Centre). Youth read through the second form and check off all of the items that apply to their lives.

There is no space provided for youth to elaborate or provide additional items. Barriers contained on this form include statements such as, "I feel my gender prevents me from getting some jobs"; "I feel employers might not hire me because of how I look"; or "I sometimes have a hard time controlling my anger." James explains why the organization uses this self-assessment form like this:

> The purpose is to help us figure out a little more about them, the youth, that might not be covered in the first intake form, and to learn about how they view themselves. It also can help see which areas they feel insecure about and can give *insight on which areas to focus on*. For example, you can see from reading it that somebody might have anger issues; that usually comes through. You know, things like that; things that aren't usually statistically caught. (emphasis added)

Together these two forms help determine the subsequent action of employment counselors, other services providers, and youth that will follow. For example, James (Rural Branch) explains how this second intake form helps him determine why a young person is currently "out of work." He says:

> The first form, and the way that the stat is captured might suggest job retention issues. Well, if they haven't had a job before, you might look at that and examine a little further. Then, on the second form, you find out that they admit to having trouble with anger or getting in trouble with the law. As an employment counselor we want to remember this. *You want to teach them those workplace skills; how do they keep their job before they lose it*. (emphasis added)

Although the items captured on this second self-assessment form are not required for participation in Employment Service, James' account makes visible how the documentary reality the form produces orientates his subsequent work within this program. Finding out and documenting why the young person has "job retention" issues helps James decide what he does to support the client in learning about how to keep a job. Notably, while this documentary activity on the second

intake form also organizes what services will be provided to youth through the Rural Branch or Urban Youth Center, it does not alter the information that is collected for funders; What is recorded in EOIS-CaMS (Employment Ontario Information System Case Management System) is that the youth has job retention issues rather than trouble with anger. In other words, while the documentation of young people's needs organizes what happens next, these needs are made accountable to Employment Ontario and the Ministry in ways that fit into the larger institutional order (de Montigny, 1995).

Service Plans

Employment counselors move from the intake forms to the actual delivery of services through the service plan. The service plan is an outline of the activities that the young person will do to achieve his or her employment and training goals. Employment counselors document these goals at the bottom of the first intake form and the youth and staff sign the consent and participation agreement portion. In this way, the service plan operates as an institutional response that intervenes in people's experiences of unemployment in order to help them find and keep work.

Employment Ontario (2011) defines these service plans as necessary for "achieving successful outcomes" (p. 48). Often these plans include employment and training workshops and one-on-one appointments with staff that focus on finding jobs for youth (Employment Ontario, 2011). However, Employment Ontario and the Ministry also note that through the intake process, service providers may refer clients to other services "either before or concurrently with Employment Service" (Employment Ontario, 2011, p. 49). Across both the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch, these plans allow staff to address the multiple forms of disadvantage in young people's lives. Tessa, an employment counselor in the Urban Youth Centre, explains how this works:

> Every time you see them it could change. So, yeah, 'cuz it is like I said, they can be all over the place. When they first come in, I do a lot of ranking systems with them, like on a scale of 1-10 where would you say you are in terms of needing a job, or needing to finish your high school. At that initial snapshot I can get a sense of, "OK

> where's this person at? Is their main priority today just maintaining their Ontario Works [provincial social assistance program] cheque and they're coming to us because OW [Ontario Works] said 'go to the Centre or you're cut off!'" And so, it just helps me to better know, like, do I have to book a resume workshop and start talking about job strategies tomorrow, or do we have time that we can really work on their other stuff? That's how I determine. But every time I see them it's gonna be different, 'cuz the next time they come in it could be like, "Ok I got kicked out. I need a job yesterday!" So then I work with what I see. So they could be doing very well and so you bring them into Employment Service and next thing you know they're homeless and all this life is happening. I think they see the Centre as a place where they can come for all kinds of different things and not just, "I go to see Tessa 'cuz she's going to help me find a job." I think it's like, "I go to see Tessa 'cuz she can help me find resources for everything." So yeah, I'm still going to take them in as a client, but we're gonna have to figure out a plan to get the stats.

Importantly, how employment counselors use pre-determined institutional outcomes to understand young people's lives occurs in a way that also shapes how young people's needs are actually responded to by counselors.

Employment Service Outcomes and "Good Stats"

Youths' service plans are inextricably tied to specific service outcomes which employment counselors' work is expected to achieve. Here is what Carla (Urban Youth Centre) tells me:

> Part of the model that we're working under needs someone unattached to the labor force and unattached to school in a full-time way in order for them to qualify for Employment Services. So those indicators have to be present. [...] Also I try to look for other barriers; that's what our programs are designed to help—those who are highly barriered. […] But we do want someone to be successful in the program, so that's another kind of something that you have to listen for—is the client too highly barriered they aren't going to be successful in the program?

Carla's account makes visible the intricate relationship between documenting "indicators," providing service to "highly barriered" youth, and achieving "success" in accordance with the Employment Ontario and Ministry accountability standards. Thus, it is not just the complex lives of young people that makes it difficult for employment counselors to put together a service plan but also the expectations surrounding what Employment Service is expected to achieve.

Staff in the Rural Branch also speak about the intersection between the program expectations and the reality of young people's lives. For example, Sam, a program facilitator involved with clients in Employment Services in the Rural Branch, tells me that:

> We are having problems with people [in the program] having a certain level of hygiene when working with food. So that makes it really tough; *but then you need those people for the stats to keep the funding, so then you're in a catch 22. What do you do?"* (emphasis added)

In situations like this, reporting program outcomes takes precedent over providing service to more vulnerable populations. These accounts reveal that it may be harder to provide services to those persons with more than employment needs, because despite representing a "strategic priority" on paper (Employment Ontario 2011, p. 18), in practice these types of clients are harder to transform into successful outcomes as defined by Employment Service.

Despite these constraints, the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch are required to have 70 percent of clients leave Employment Service as employed in either full-time work or in something better than what they had when they came in. In addition to this, 10 percent of clients must "exit" the program as having returned to school or having entered some form of employment training (Carla, Urban Youth Centre; Employment Ontario, 2011, p. 105; Leni, program manager in both organizational sites). Consultants from the Ministry regularly come into the organization throughout the fiscal year to assess the work being done by the Urban Youth Centre and the Rural Branch in meeting these targets (Tessa, Urban Youth Centre).

Together, the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch have

continued to receive ongoing funding to deliver this program (Annual Reports[1], 2009-2010, 2011-12; 2012-13). Although this might suggest that the organization has been successful at meeting program outcomes, Tessa (Urban Youth Centre) tells me that reporting these outcomes is challenging when working with youth. She says, "[Youth] can be in school. But really that doesn't ... being in school doesn't really... it counts. It sounds really weird, but the best thing ever is to have them have a job." When I ask her to elaborate about what this means in terms of reporting outcomes, she says:

> The stats are scary. With Employment Service it's like, if you hear they're employed you exit them right now. Even if they have to come back next week, you bring them back in. To me it's frustrating because I've closed so many people as being employed, even though I know this is not sustainable employment; this isn't going to last. But I have to have the stat so I'm gonna close them knowing that they're going to come back a week later and we're gonna have to go through this paperwork again. And they're gonna wonder, "I already did this, why am I doing it again?" And you don't want [them] knowing that they're a stat within this big thing, because it doesn't make them feel very special.

What counts as a reportable outcome also comes into play in the ways that employment counselors interpret education outcomes. Tessa says:

> Education gets tricky, 'cuz when you're working with youth so many of them go back to school and unfortunately you can't have that high of an education stat 'cuz you're working towards having 70% employed. And 70% employed it's like, you know, you get some wiggle room for education. So you want to celebrate the success of education, but in the same sense you're like, "OK, Do you want a part-time job?" And they don't. They're like, "No, I'm in school, I'm happy." And it's like, "I'm not happy."

Thus, program outcomes not only organize what is expected

to happen for/to youth, but also how service providers think through their work.

The notion of accountability circuits (Smith, D. E., 2005) can be used to describe how the activities of employment counselors are standardized and regulated. Smith (D. E., 2005) describes accountability circuits as occurring when "work is tied into text and text into work" (p. 184). In this case, the activities of employment counselors align with the Employment Service guidelines, the funding agreement, and the outcomes the program is expected to generate. Figure 1 illustrates this process; it shows how the work involved in intake forms, service plans, and program outcomes are all organized by and fitted back into this institutional framework.

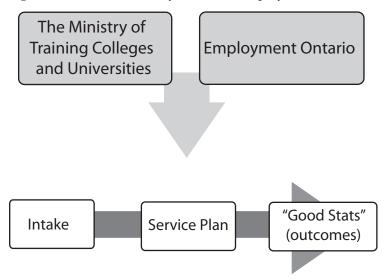Figure 1. The Accountability Circuit in Employment Service

Figure 1 shows how the program guidelines enter into the work of employment counselors when they initiate the intake process with a youth, as described earlier with intake forms one and two. Here employment counselors' work focuses on "demonstrating" and "rationalizing" that young people are suitable for the program (Employment Ontario, 2011, p. 48). The activation of the intake forms is tied to the subsequent service decisions that are documented by employment counselors on service plans and signed by the client. While at first

glance it seems sensible that the identification of youth needs would be tied to direct services, figure 1 shows that these service decisions are actually tied to program expectations and outcomes outlined in the funding agreements between Employment Ontario, the Ministry, and the entire organization; for example, 70% of youth taken into the program will leave as employed. Thus, rather than service outcomes that are unique to young people's lives, institutional frameworks or accountability circuits organize how employment counselors produce clients and "good" outcomes.

Producing "Good Stats" and the Activation of Other Social Services

Young people come into the organization for many reasons beyond employment including poverty, homelessness and insecure housing, addictions, issues surrounding sexual health and sexuality, mental health, and education. In the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch, Employment Service clients receive support for their multiple needs while in the program. Determination of these other needs is expected to occur during the intake process for Employment Service, where service providers then facilitate clients access to additional social services (Employment Ontario, 2011, p. 58). Linking Employment Service clients to other services is important for documenting "performance management indicators," or outcomes, to funders (Employment Ontario, 2011, p. 69).

In the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch I find that the coordination of Employment Service with other services happens in two ways. First, in the intake process employment counselors give information to youth about "referrals" (James, Rural Branch; Carla, Urban Youth Centre) and "resources for everything" (Tessa, Urban Youth Centre). In these instances, youth are expected to take this information and initiate services independently. Through my participant observations, I find that, in practice, this usually only happens with food and basic needs programming.

Second, information contained on the Employment Service intake forms is shared physically and virtually with other staff from the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch, as well as other service providers external to these sites. In this way, what gets written down on Employment Service intake forms

gets "reactivated" (de Montigny, 1995, p. 115) such that multiple service providers both inside and beyond these sites simultaneously work with young people's diverse needs. For example, James (Rural Branch) tells me that information contained on the intake forms is shared between employment counselors, youth, and other staff in a way that creates "client centered support" and "good stats" for Employment Service (field notes, February 24, 2012, April 4, 2012). Carry, a program manager of a training program delivered in the Urban Youth Centre, but outside of Employment Service, explains how she gains information about youth involved in Employment Service like this:

> The blended service comes from the intake with an employment counselor. That's where it's identified that we have [this other training program]. And then I connect with the employment counselor. Usually the employment counselor sends me the first form and comes to me and says, "I've got this really great client. I think they're ready. This is what they have. These are the barriers, etc." I can see this on the form, too. I set up an interview (with the youth). We interview. And based on how the interview goes, bring them through our program for the next available spot. So the youth is both in Employment Service and in our program.

Carry's account reveals that the intake process for Employment Service activates the work of other services providers (Devault & McCoy, 2006). In addition to sharing information contained on intake forms, employment counselors and other organizational staff use "webtracker," an online organizational reporting system, to document any services including, and beyond, Employment Service that clients used. Tessa (Urban Youth Centre) explains why this happens like this:

> It's to track their every movement; "Oh they [the client] did a workshop, make sure you make a note about that. Oh they did that, make note of it." And so you have to really document in your notes almost the wording that Employment Service wants to see. 'Cuz they're like, "Oh we want to know exactly what did they do."

And so sometimes you'll meet with clients and you're thinking to yourself, "Oh, you went into one of our other workshops? I should probably talk about this 'cuz then I could link it to getting a stat."

Notably, the work involved in producing these multiple service opportunities for youth are crucial for achieving "good stats" in Employment Service. Tessa tells me that when she works with transgender youth, the issues of gender and sexuality come up and have to be addressed by multiple service providers through support services. In these situations, accessing other service providers still achieves the Employment Service outcomes. She says:

You have to keep telling [the Ministry] these clients' stories so that they're hearing that, "yeah it might have taken me 9 months to get an employed stat, but here's all the stuff that we've had to do to get to that point. And so you need to know that it's not just me dropping this client. It's [all of] us doing all of these little things."

Although there are multiple service providers involved in young people's participation in Employment Service, Tessa still achieves an "employed stat" that is fitted back into the institutional reporting framework for this program.

Other Social Services Delivered to Employment Service Clients
Although the Employment Service intake process in the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch requires that employment counselors fit young people's lives into categories focused on employment and training, young people's lives consist of more than just difficulties with unemployment. Because the production of Employment Service outcomes by employment counselors is often improved when clients are referred to services beyond the program, the availability of resources located within the Urban Youth Center and the Rural Branch is an important aspect of their ability to produce "good stats." Compared to the Urban Youth Centre, in the Rural Branch a lack of resources constrains the ways that employment counselors determine what services are delivered to youth. Making visible how "good stats" are produced and reported to Employment Ontario and the Ministry shows how

the unequal distribution of resources across the two sites is implicated in the organizational response to the actual needs of youth.

Rural Branch: "Other" Service Opportunities Linked to Employment Service

In the Rural Branch Employment Service, clients often partake in the Self-Employment Business Program (SEB) that is delivered on site. This program is not offered in the Urban Youth Centre. The SEB program runs for 12 weeks consecutively and involves training workshops including Workplace, Hazardous Material and Information System (WHMIS) and First Aid and information sessions aimed at teaching young people about how to start their own businesses. To be entered into this program, young people first meet with the employment counselor where they are produced as clients in Employment Service as described above. The information gained by employment counselors through the intake process is shared with the program facilitators in the SEB program. In addition to the SEB program, the Rural Branch has a Resource Centre that lists available housing, employment opportunities, an afternoon snack program, and recreational programming. Youth learn about all of these other services from their employment counselors. In the Rural Branch, staff easily document in the Employment Service reporting system when clients access the SEB program. This happens because the SEB program requires that young people be screened by staff before enrollment in the program. However, staff also tell me that when clients use other services inside the Rural Branch that are more "self-serve" (i.e., snacks, and the resource room) it is "tough" to keep track and document these activities (James, Sam, Rural Branch).

In addition to other services provided by internal staff, employment counselors also connect clients to external organizations whose services are delivered within the Rural Branch. Leni, the program manager for Employment Service across both sites, tells me that this is called an "in-kind contribution" that is a "partnership between service providers without money being exchanged." For example, Employment Service clients are often referred to Ontario Works and

community counseling services. When clients use services beyond Employment Service, employment counselors and other staff in the Rural Branch document these activities using the online reporting system. In other words, connecting clients in Employment Service to these external services is made visible in EOIS-CaMS and webtracker. Like programs offered by the Rural Branch, using these external organizations is important for meeting successful outcomes as designated by Employment Service. James explains:

> I would say counseling is the number one thing that comes up. You really have to focus on their basic needs and their ability to focus on work. They could come in and if they've got abuse going on at home, 9 times out of 10 they aren't gonna hold down any job you helped them get.

Despite the importance of these external services to meeting Employment Service goals, young people are put on waitlists and are at the mercy of external service providers' schedules (Leni, program manager). However, unlike the Urban Youth Center, many of the external service organizations connected to the Rural Branch offer services intermittently.

Interestingly, in the Rural Branch youth needs surrounding homelessness, addictions, and sexuality are less likely to make it onto employment counselors' documentary practices. Rural Branch staff explain that this happens because when employment counselors decide to bring a youth into Employment Service their work focuses exclusively on producing "good stats" (employment, education or training). This work, Laura tells me "counts." But if the young person is also dealing with homelessness or issues around sexuality, staff say that their response is to "do nothing" (Laura, Rural Branch) because "there are no places to go. There's nothing" (Maureen, Rural Branch). These comments suggest that there is a limited service framework available in this setting to address the multiple needs of rural youth.

Importantly, this limited service framework does not mean that support is not provided or that staff are unable to meet the expectations required for Employment Service. For example, Sam tells me that when staff in the Rural Branch learned of a

homeless youth connected to Employment Service who did not have appropriate outdoor gear, they started a drop-in program where they made a blanket using the sewing machines and scrap pieces of recreational supplies because there were no other organizational service options. Ironically, this activity was never tied to this homeless youth but rather was documented as a recreational activity that involved three other youth. In other words, providing a blanket was not counted towards the production of a "good stat" in Employment Service. In the Rural Branch, documenting youths' experiences of homelessness through the reporting system for Employment Service would appear like an unmet need because there are no services available in the rural setting that can respond to this particular need. Instead of detailing the institutional constraints in using other services to produce "good stats" in Employment Service, the experience of youth homelessness among those who use Employment Service at the Rural Branch disappears.

Urban Youth Centre: "Other" Service Opportunities Linked to Employment Service

Unlike in the Rural Branch, employment counselors in the Urban Youth Centre say that when they learn that young people are dealing with homelessness, addictions, poverty, mental health, and sexualities they "write down everything" (field note, April 2, 2012), and "include it all on the first or second form" of the intake process (field note, April 3, 2012). They tell me that this information becomes important for generating service plans and producing "good stats." Emma, a Program Facilitator in the Urban Youth Centre explains:

> Often these other services focus on the basic needs. The way it ties into our Employment Service is that we know that it is really hard to look for a career or a job or get into school and be successful in that if you don't have your basic needs met first; it's just human nature to make sure that you have those needs met first.

Employment Service clients in the Urban Youth Centre have access to a broader array of services delivered by onsite staff than in the Rural Branch. Services in the Urban Youth Center

include: industry-specific employment training programs, recreational programming, a Resource Centre, a monthly food bank, meal programs, needle-exchange and safe needle drop bins, laundry services and hygiene supplies, and transitional housing programs. Compared to the Rural Branch, there is a much wider array of resources and services that shapes how the involvement of youth in Employment Service unfolds in the Urban Youth Centre. Table 1 provides a list of the services available in the Urban Youth Center and the Rural Branch that young people come into contact with through their participation in Employment Service.

Compared to the services offered by external organizations in the Rural Branch, Employment Service clients in the Urban Youth Centre have access to in-kind partnerships that are more stable (Annual Report[1], 2012-13). These external service opportunities are an essential part of the regular on-going programming offered within the Urban Youth Centre. Services provided by external service providers include weekly anonymous HIV testing and other health services, counseling, parenting groups, access to an Ontario Works Trustee, and alternative education programming including GED testing. Like the Rural Branch, all of these external resource opportunities are located inside the Urban Youth Centre. What differs, however, is the number and range of services available to young people. This difference is attributed to the fact that many of the external service organizations do not operate in this rural community.

In the Urban Youth Centre, access into these integrated resource opportunities is embedded in the Employment Service intake process. Josie provides an example of how sharing information contained on intake forms with other staff initiates young people's access into non-employment services opportunities. She says:

> We help them with food. Whatever we have here on site they're welcome to take home. We also help them with our local food banks. We have to teach them where you can get food, where all the food banks are, how often you can go, baby food banks—if they don't know, we give them booklets on where everything is. And unfortunately, as a community all of our social service

hours run until 4 o'clock. So, we schedule work time around getting to the food bank to make sure they have food at home. *This is important so they're successful at work. 'Cuz the goal of the end of the program is to either have them with a goal to go to school and/or be employed. That's our goal. But, they're not employable if they don't have food.* (emphasis added)

Table 1: Services Beyond Employment Service Accessed by Youth

	Urban Youth Centre	Rural Branch
Services delivered by internal staff	• Meal programs (3x a day) • Industry-specific employ-ment training programs —("Endeavour") • Recreation • Resource Centre • Monthly food bank (includ-ing baby food) • Needle-exchange program and safe needle drop bins • Laundry services and hygiene supplies • Transitional housing and affordable housing programming	• Snack (1x day) • SEB Program • Recreation • Resource Centre
Services delivered by external service providers	• Ontario Works • School Board—Alternative Education, GED testing • RHIV Aids—Harm Reduction and HIV education • Community Health Agency —Counseling, Anonymous HIV testing • Other community orga-nizations—recreational activities, housing support, addiction support	• Ontario Works • School Board —alternative education • Family Community Agency— Personal Counseling • Other com-munity organizations —recreational activities

Josie illustrates how the work of connecting youth to mul-tiple service opportunities both inside and beyond the Urban

Youth Centre is important for accomplishing the outcomes required for Employment Service. However, in practice, how this is achieved across these organizational sites institutionally differentiates the response to young people's needs.

Conclusion

Throughout this article I have demonstrated that even though the Urban Youth Centre and its Rural Branch are ostensibly delivering the same programs and producing similar outcomes, rural youth experience a service disparity relative to urban youth. In the Urban Youth Centre, there are many more services available to employment counselors that can help transform young people's complex needs into "good stats." These multiple needs are included in the documentary process of intake forms because they can be linked to existing services. In practice, then, a "good stat" reflects a more comprehensive social service experience for urban youth. By contrast, employment counselors in the Rural Branch are not able to enact the same service response for rural youth because of a lack of other services within the site and community. Needs that cannot be addressed with a concrete service or that are difficult to track are not documented by employment counselors. Young people's experiences of homelessness, addictions and issues around sexualities are less visible in the Employment Service intake process at both sites; however, invisibility has greater consequences for rural youth, since employment counselors cannot translate their needs readily into successful program outcomes for Employment Ontario, and the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities. In other words, in Employment Service linking youths' needs to available community service providers means success. In sites with few or intermittent service providers, young people's diverse needs in relation to working or returning to school are treated institutionally as if they do not exist (Diamond, 1995).

I started this article highlighting the dissonance between staffs' documentary practices in the Urban Youth Centre relative to the Rural Branch. The analysis uncovers that this is not an issue of organizational inefficiency, but rather a problem with the availability and organization of social services across these organizational settings that can actually respond to the

diverse needs of youth. On this basis, I argue that the availability and organization of service resources is important to how institutional relations obfuscate the experiences of young people (Smith, G. W., 1990). Maureen, a staff member in the Rural Branch, tells me that if youth are in the organization "they're here for a reason." However, in practice relative to the Urban Youth Centre, these institutional processes fail to convey the breadth of reasons that youth come to the Rural Branch. Thus, even across a single organization, standardized provincial programs do not always translate into uniform services for youth.

Note:
1. Annual Reports for 2009-2010, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 are produced by the organization and are made publicly available on their website. Items contained within these reports include: executive reports, yearly reviews of programming, and revenues and expenditures.

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